McCLURE'S

The pages which are missing were removed because they were advertisements

ANCE 25 Cents

Beginning "HOT SATURDAY"

and Kathleen Norris ~ Wallace Irwin

Free Tests of any—See Coupon

Man-Made Beauty

I give credit to men in large part for my beauty and my youth. To the scientists of France and elsewhere who gave their best to me. Mine is a cultivated beauty. All that women envy in me is due to expert care.

The helps I use are due to 40 years of searching. I have made 34 trips to France. There as a girl I learned how to multiply my beauty, and thus gained my glorious career. There I learned how to keep my youth. Now, at a grandmother's age, I look like a debutante. The thousands who see me daily on the stage marvel at my bloom.

I am sharing these helps with others. Any toilet counter can supply you Edna Wallace Hopper's beauty aids. They are the best beautifiers the world gave me and I believe them the best in existence. This is to urge you to try them at my cost. See how quickly they bring new fascinations. I believe you will be amazed and delighted.

Edna Wallace Hopper

MISS HOPPER as she appears to-day *Photo by Alfred Cheney Johnston*

Do What I Do

Watch the new loveliness develop Your friends will marvel at the change

By Edna Wallace Hopper

These are the leading Edna Wallace Hopper beauty helps. These four preparations combine 52 ingredients and embody the best I have found. Send coupon for a trial. When you once learn what any one can do, I believe you will use them all.

White Youth Clay

This is a new-type clay, the final results of 20 years of scientific study. It is white, refined and dainty. It combines with three clays other factors which every skin requires. So don't confuse it with the old-type crude and muddy clays.

Youth Clay purges the skin of all that clogs and mars it. It draws out the causes of blackheads and blemishes. It combats all lines and wrinkles. It brings the blood to the skin to nourish and revive it. The quick result is a rosy afterglow.

I have seen Youth Clay bring to countless girls new beauty in half an hour. Older women often seem to drop ten years. The sample will prove to you that no girl or woman can appear at her best without it.

A Multiple Cream

My Youth Cream comes in two types—cold cream and vanishing. One is for night use, the other for day. No skin should ever be an hour without it.

My Youth Cream applies many valuable factors, all in one application. These include products of both lemon and strawberry. Also all the best that science knows to foster, feed and preserve the skin.

The first night's use of my Youth Cream will be a revelation to you. My baby-like complexion shows what daily use can do.

My Facial Youth

My Facial Youth is a liquid cleanser which I found in France. Today this formula is recognized everywhere as the greatest of skin cleansers. The leading beauty experts advise and employ it, for nothing else known can compare. But my Facial Youth is first to offer this great cleanser at a modest price.

Facial Youth contains no animal, no vegetable fat. It cannot assimilate in any way with the skin. It simply cleans to the depths, then departs. And with it goes all the grime and dirt, dead skin and clogging matter.

I never knew what a clean skin meant until I found this product. Nor will you. And a clean skin is the foundation of beauty. I urge you to learn what it means.

My Hair Youth

Millions marvel at my hair. It is thick and lustrous, far more luxuriant than 40 years ago. I have never had falling hair or dandruff and never a touch of gray.

This I also owe to France. Her great experts gave me what is now combined in my Hair Youth. The product is concentrated, so I apply it with an eye-dropper directly to the scalp. There it combats the hardened oil and dandruff which stifle the hair roots. It tones and stimulates the scalp. You feel that instantly. Hair thrives on a scalp so cared for as flowers thrive in a well-kept garden.

The sample bottle which I send with eye-dropper will show you what Hair Youth does.

This coupon will bring you a sample of the help you most desire. My Beauty Book will come with it, also some samples of my products. Clip it and send it to me.

Your Choice FREE

Mail this coupon to Edna Wallace Hopper, 536 Lake Shore Drive, Chicago. Check the sample wanted. My Beauty Book will come with it, also samples of my face powders.

☐ Facial Youth ☐ White Youth Clay
☐ Hair Youth ☐ Youth Cream

Name .....

Address .....

One sample is free. If you want more than one, enclose 10c for each additional sample.

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V.57

Vol. 57 **McCLURE'S** No. 1

THE MAGAZINE OF ROMANCE

Arthur McKeogh, *Editor*

July 1926

CONTENTS

Cover Design by R. F. Schabelitz

Prelude

Page

by ***Kathleen Norris*** — WHERE I FOUND ROMANCE — 10
—with decorations by Walter Jardine

Serials

by ***Harvey Fergusson*** — *—with drawings by George Van Werveke* — HOT SATURDAY — 12

by ***Warner Fabian*** — *—with drawings by Joseph W. Golinkin* — SUMMER BACHELORS — 42

Short Stories

by ***Shirley Siefert*** — *—with drawing by R. W. Woolman* — HILDEGARDE FOR LUCK — 18

by ***Helen Topping Miller*** — DRUMS IN A WHITE GLARE — 21
—with drawings by Edward C. Caswell

by ***John Dwight Ellis*** — THE PRINCESS AND THE BUNK — 28
—with drawing by Johan Bull

by ***Helen Schermerhorn Young*** — WHAT PRICE BEAUTY — 32
—with drawings by Eugene McNerney, Jr.
and a special photographic study by the International News Service

by ***Genevieve Neergaard*** — *—with drawings by Johan Bull* — A SKYSCRAPER MAN — 36

by ***Carl Clausen*** — *—with drawing by Edward C. Caswell* — ZERO — 48

by ***Olga Moore*** — *—with drawings by Ross Santee* — A SHEIK IN A SOMBRERO — 51

by ***Drake de Kay*** — *—with drawings by Joseph W. Golinkin* — THE COLONEL'S LADY — 58

by ***Edith Barnard Delano*** — *—with drawing by Eldon Kelley* — SOUL MATES — 62

by ***Helen Vasilos*** — *—with drawings by Eldon Kelley* — EMERALDS AND GOLD DUST — 64

by ***Rice Gaither*** — *—with drawings by Charles Sarka* — THE BLUE PIGEON — 69

Features

by ***Themselves*** — "AUTHOR! AUTHOR!" — 6

by ***Berton Braley and Arthur William Brown*** — THE BLIND DATE — 9

by ***Wallace Irwin*** — *—with drawings by August Henkel* — THE GAS MAN — 26

by ***John Held, Jr.*** — THAT McCLURE GIRL — 40

by ***Homer Croy*** — "THIS IS STATION C-R-O-Y" — 56
—with photographs by Strand Studio, courtesy of Station WJZ, N. Y.

by ***Mrs. M. and Mr. H.***—"The Love-Doctors" — ARE MOTHERS SLACKERS? — 74

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How many wives discuss these intimate matters with their husbands?

NOT so long ago the majority of women were afflicted with a self-consciousness which prevented a frank discussion of personal subjects. Now this state of affairs has been replaced by a more fearless attitude. The motto of the younger married woman of today seems to be "Knowledge itself cannot harm me."

The barriers of ignorance have been broken down. To be up-to-date in the subject of feminine hygiene, for instance, is no longer a mark of worldliness. It is a mark of common sense.

In fact, the health of the race is so much a part of this question that it is not surprising to find doctors and nurses up in arms against the use of poisonous antiseptics so prevalent for this purpose in the past.

Perfect frankness desirable

The use of these poisons goes beyond the mere personal danger. It has become a family concern, almost a public menace. Every responsible married citizen, whether man or woman, owes it to his or her family welfare to investigate personally this matter of poisonous antiseptics. Between husband and wife perfect frankness and confidence should be established, because there are many facts bearing on this subject which a man can more easily check up. Any husband or brother who saw service in Europe will tell you about the Great War antiseptic which superseded the poisonous carbolic acid and bichloride of mercury in the hospitals of the Allied Armies. Now this same antiseptic under the name of *Zonite* is superseding these poisons in the practice of feminine hygiene in American homes.

New discovery banishes poisoning risk

As every doctor knows, most compounds of cresol and phenol (carbolic acid) contain soapy ingredients to reduce the caustic, burning effect, but nevertheless they remain corrosive in their action. Their use by women frequently results in areas of scar-tissue and eventual hardening of delicate membranes.

Compare with this the benign action of Zonite. This new antiseptic and germicide is immensely powerful and yet absolutely *non-poisonous*. It is far stronger than any dilution of carbolic acid that can be applied to the body. The woman who uses Zonite for feminine hygiene is running no risk of permanent injury. She can be assured of hygienic cleanliness, surgical cleanliness, without fear of the deadly "skull-and-crossbones."

Fatal as Zonite is to germ-life, it is so harmless to human beings that leading dentists from coast to coast are recommending its use as a mouth antiseptic. What other powerful germicide can be held in the mouth? Zonite is actually safe in the hands of a child.

Full directions in package
Special booklet on request

Zonite has spread rapidly. Already it can be bought in nearly every drug store in the country. Full directions for its many uses come in every package.

However, the Women's Division has issued a special booklet for the use and convenience of women. The information it contains about modern feminine hygiene is concise and authentic. It is a booklet every mother will want to give her daughter—a booklet every wife should have. It comes in dainty "social correspondence" envelope. Send for it. Read it. Pass it along to others.

Zonite a medicine chest in itself

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For a daily mouthwash to guard against pyorrhea and other gum infections.

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Judges Who Will Choose $25,000 Prize Novel

George Barr McCutcheon
Copyright, Moffatt, Chicago

Kathleen Norris
Photo by Arnold Genthe

Henry Van Dyke
Copyright, Pirie MacDonald

McCLURE'S takes pride in announcing the names of the judges for its $25,000 Prize Novel Contest—Dr. Henry Van Dyke, Kathleen Norris and George Barr McCutcheon.

These names stand for distinction of literary achievement, popularity with the general reading public, and are representative of the country from coast to coast. Mrs. Norris is a Californian; Dr. Van Dyke, from 1900 to 1923 was professor of English Literature at Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey; Mr. McCutcheon of Indiana is one of that group of novelists which has made the Central States famous for romance as well as tall corn and Presidents; he is the president of the Author's League of America.

No one writes more feelingly of the American home than Kathleen Norris; no one understands America's youthful love of romantic adventure better than McCutcheon; no one has personified American idealism more truly than Dr. Van Dyke.

THE RULES OF THE CONTEST

TO the author of the novel best adapted for magazine and book publication, and motion picture production, as determined by the judges of this contest, a prize of $25,000 in cash will be paid.

McClure's, Cosmopolitan Book Corporation, and Cosmopolitan Productions will acquire, respectively, all serial rights, American and Canadian book rights and world motion picture rights.

Of the total prize, Cosmopolitan Book Corporation will pay $5000 in advance on account of a royalty of ten per cent of the published price of all copies of the book sold in the United States; five per cent of all copies sold in Canada; and fifty per cent of the money received for foreign rights, not including the Canadian, unless the author elects to handle foreign rights individually. On the popular reprint edition, which appears from one to two years after regular book publication, Cosmopolitan Book Corporation will pay fifty per cent of the money received.

1—McClure's Prize Novel Contest opened June 1, 1926, and closes at midnight, January 1, 1927. Any writer is eligible (foreign citizenship being no bar,) who has never before had a novel published in book form, or who has had no more than three novels published in book form.

2—The novel must not be more than 110,000 words in length, nor less than 80,000 words.

3—All manuscripts must be signed with a pen-name, with the author's real name and address in an attached sealed envelope bearing the pen-name. These envelopes will be held unopened in our vaults until after the judges have made their decision. Novels submitted without regard to this rule will not be entered.

4—No correspondence can be entered into concerning rejected manuscripts, nor can changes or corrections be made in manuscripts once they have been submitted.

5—The judges will make the final decision, from which there can be no appeal.

6—All reasonable care will be exercised in the handling of manuscripts, but McClure's will not be responsible for loss, or damage by fire, in transit, or in any other way. Manuscripts must be sent with charges prepaid and accompanied by postage for return; they may be addressed to: The Editors, McClure's Prize Novel Contest, 119 West 40th Street, New York, N. Y.

7—A writer may enter more than one novel. No one may compete who is employed by any of the three participating organizations, or related to such employees. All manuscripts must be original. No translations will be considered. Collaborations will not be entered. The publishers cannot be made party to any libel action or suit for damages that might grow out of the contest in any connection therewith. All manuscripts must be typewritten, double-spaced, and on one side of the paper only.

Novels submitted which do not win the prize but which have adequate merit will be given the advantage of possible choice for serial publication in McClure's, for book publication by Cosmopolitan Book Corporation, and for production by Cosmopolitan Productions.

Next Month

LILITH BENDA

What would you do if your fiance suddenly announced he was in love with a notorious dancer? Be too proud to enter into such rivalry, or fight for his —and your own—happiness? Anne fought.

Read **Dear Daddy**

ELLIOTT WHITE SPRINGS

Blinded, he could not see his nurse. Nor, strive as he might, could he remember the face of the other girl. Who were they, the nurse he could not see—the girl he could not remember?

Read **The 18 Carat Angel**

The Love Doctors—*Each month in McClure's a man and a woman, both especially fitted to understand personal problems, answer the letter of most general interest received from a McClure reader. Thus there is obtained a masculine and feminine opinion on the same question. Read* **The Love Doctors** *from month to month. You may find in what they have to say the solution of your own problem.*

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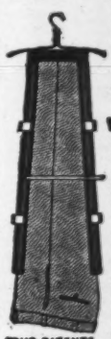

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Of McCLURE'S, published monthly at New York, N. Y., for Apr. 1, 1926, State of New York, County of New York, ss. Before me, a Notary Public in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared R. E. Berlin, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the Business Manager of McCLURE'S and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management (and if a daily paper, the circulation), etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, embodied in section 411, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to wit: 1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are: Publisher, International Publications, Inc., 119 West 40th Street, New York City; Editor, Arthur McKeogh; Managing Editor, none; Business Managers, R. E. Berlin. 2. That the owner is: (If owned by a corporation, its name and address must be stated and also immediately thereunder the names and addresses of stockholders owning or holding one per cent or more of total amount of stock. If not owned by a corporation, the names and addresses of the individual owners must be given. If owned by a firm, company, or other unincorporated concern, its name and address, as well as those of each individual member, must be given.) International Publications, Inc., 119 W. 40th St., Sole Stockholder, Hearst Publications, Inc.; Hearst Pubs., Inc., 705 Call Bldg., San Francisco, Sole Stockholder, Star Holding Corporation; Star Holding Corporation, c-o Corporation Trust Co. of America, Wilmington, Delaware, Sole Stockholder, W. R. Hearst, 137 Riverside Drive. 3. That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 per cent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: (If there are none, so state.) None. 4. That the two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, stockholders, and security holders, if any, contain not only the list of stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company but also, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting, is given; also that the said two paragraphs contain statements embracing affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner; and this affiant has no reason to believe that any other person, association, or corporation has any interest direct or indirect in the said stock, bonds, or other securities than as so stated by him. 5. That the average number of copies of each issue of this publication sold or distributed, through the mails or otherwise, to paid subscribers during the six months preceding the date shown above is (This information is required from daily publications only.) R. E. Berlin, Business Manager. Sworn to and subscribed before me this 3rd day of April, 1926. William J. Sperl, Notary Public, Queens County No. 3749. Certificate filed in New York Co. No. 809 Reg. No. 7644. (My commission expires March 30, 1927.) [Seal]

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Plant—B. F. AVERY & SONS, Louisville, Kentucky

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President, B. F. Avery & Sons

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(Signed)
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Vice-President
General Manager of Sales.

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"AUTHOR! AUTHOR!"

Brief Bows from the Entertainers in This Month's McClure's

WALLACE IRWIN came out of the West some years ago—San Francisco to be exact—and set an entire nation laughing. The humorous philosophy of his "Love Sonnets of a Hoodlum" and "Letters of a Japanese Schoolboy" has been written into the language, whether of Broadway or Main Street. Now, in July McClure's, he presents a new character, *The Gas Man*—a quizzical individual of many opinions on many subjects. Chuck holes, crime waves, or what-have-you constitute problems that serious minds may some day solve; in the meantime the gas man will help to laugh their hardships off.

KATHLEEN NORRIS has found romance. In her many novels, from "Mother," specially commended by President Roosevelt, to her latest book, "The Black Flemings," this finder of romance has passed the precious stuff of her dreams along to millions of readers. In *Where I Found Romance,* Mrs. Norris tells where every man, woman and child may locate romance—anywhere, at any time—and the place isn't far from home.

Wallace Irwin invents for McClure's a brand new receipt for laughing off the heebie-jeebies.
Photo by Underwood and Underwood

HARVEY FERGUSSON is a comparatively new writer. It is typical of his viewpoint that—having been born in New Mexico—he should lay the action of *Hot Saturday* in a little Southwestern town near the Mexican border; the sort of town he knows from personal contact. Before settling down to fiction writing, Mr. Fergusson served in the United States Forest Service, and later as a newspaper man in Washington, where he collected the material that went into his book, "Capitol Hill." He has published two other novels.

HELEN SCHERMERHORN YOUNG, after fifteen years spent as wife, mother and housekeeper, decided she could and would write. She began three years ago, and her decision was justified. She is the author of the popular "Foxy Grandpa" stories which children admire greatly. *What Price Beauty* reveals the more sophisticated Mrs. Young—a person of social background, familiar with the courts of Europe; who knows Lloyd George, Mussolini and the King of Spain. Mrs. Young is the wife of Judge William Young of New York City.

RICE GAITHER, author of *The Blue Pigeon,* lives in Alabama in a house that looks down over the tree tops into beautiful Mobile Bay. There he cultivates oranges and writes romance—when he is not vacationing in Europe. He says he actually "*saw* The Blue Pigeon while sitting on the terrace at Monte Carlo," and was so impressed with the birds' side of the sport of pot-shooting that he wrote the story.

DRAKE DE KAY spent fourteen months with the A. E. F. as a Second Lieutenant of Infantry. His vivid pictures of action at the front, in *The Colonel's Lady,* can have been taken only from scenes he himself witnessed. Mr. de Kay was born in Berlin, where his father was American Consul General during the second Cleveland administration.

HELEN VASILOS, though her home is in Baltimore, has lived much of her life in England and France where she revels in ancient castles and old-time atmosphere. It is not surprising that she chose for her story, *Emeralds and Gold Dust,* a setting out of the romantic past.

CARL CLAUSEN is a traveler from one end of the globe to the other. The wilds of Africa, South America and the less civilized islands of the seas have been his haunts. *Zero,* a story of our own West, is packed with drama, and could have been conceived only by a true adventurer.

GENEVIEVE NEERGAARD is another new writer, and at present a student at Columbia University. Her *Skyscraper Man* is a delightful and entertaining story. She was born in San Francisco.

WARNER FABIAN, of "Flaming Youth" fame, concerning whose real identity there is more conjecture than ever since the appearance last month of the first instalment of *Summer Bachelors,* offers the following revelation, to wit, that "he—or she—writes with a pen, corrects with a pencil (blue), wears expensive clothes and drinks coffee for breakfast." Which should satisfy even the ultra curious!

JOHN DWIGHT ELLIS also is a pen name. It is patent that the author of *The Princess and the Bunk* knows a good deal about the inside workings of the motion picture. It is not so patent whether this author is of the sterner or the gentler sex, but, man or woman, "he" confesses to "abandoning, at the age of seventeen, a career of gorgeous loafing to enter the University of Virginia, and at twenty the University of Virginia abandoned me for a career of gorgeous loafing."

HOMER CROY is from Missouri. He was born there. He wrote "West of the Water Tower," and showed the rest of the country that it is possible to become famous over night. Now he is telling funny stories to a large radio audience. In *"This Is Station C-R-O-Y!"* he recounts studio happenings that never have the freedom of the air. However, since these tales of mash notes from smitten maidens and temperamental outbursts modestly concern other artists than himself, it is not known whether Mr. Croy receives basketfuls of tender missives from admirers. But it is known that he makes a wonderful friend. His latest letter to McClure's was signed "Yours till they give gasoline away." Greater fidelity than this hath no man.

SHIRLEY SEIFERT is another person from Missouri with a sense of humor. She is the author of *Hildegarde for Luck*—Hildegarde being one dilapidated Ford car painted "sky-blue-pink." Miss Seifert swears that "the pink Ford was as real as could be."

HELEN TOPPING MILLER, assisted by "one valuable husband, one red-headed son, and one Collie dog," is "trying to rehabilitate a little mountain farm three miles from Ashville, and persuade water to run up hill." Whether or not she can change the law of gravity is a question, but there is no doubt of her ability as a teller of tales. *Drums in a White Glare* proves that.

OLGA MOORE is a new writer whose first published story is *A Sheik in a Sombrero.* She says she "was born in Wyoming—thank God," but "loves Boston," where she is living at present. She was graduated only three years ago from the University of Wyoming and believes "marriage licenses should be granted only to persons with a sense of humor."

EDITH BARNARD DELANO, who is among the best known short story writers in the country protests—

"I can cook, I can sew, I can work, I can play,
But I cannot write au-to-bi-og-ra-phay!"

However, for twenty years the author of *Soul Mates* has been entertaining people with her romances about people. "I like to write about people," she says, "but I like to talk to them better." She also likes dogs, "other people's cats" and her garden, where she "breaks every garden rule, but where everything grows."

JOHN HELD, JR., some time ago, got into a mix-up with a horse on his farm in Connecticut. When it was all over Mr. Held had to have his face lifted—back into place. The plastic surgeons did an excellent job and Mr. Held's countenance is as engaging as ever. But it is just possible that what old Dobbin did to him left such a mental impression that, when his *McClure Girl* gets into a row with her boss, Mr. Held instinctively has her "crack him over the bean" with a telephone.

McCLURE'S

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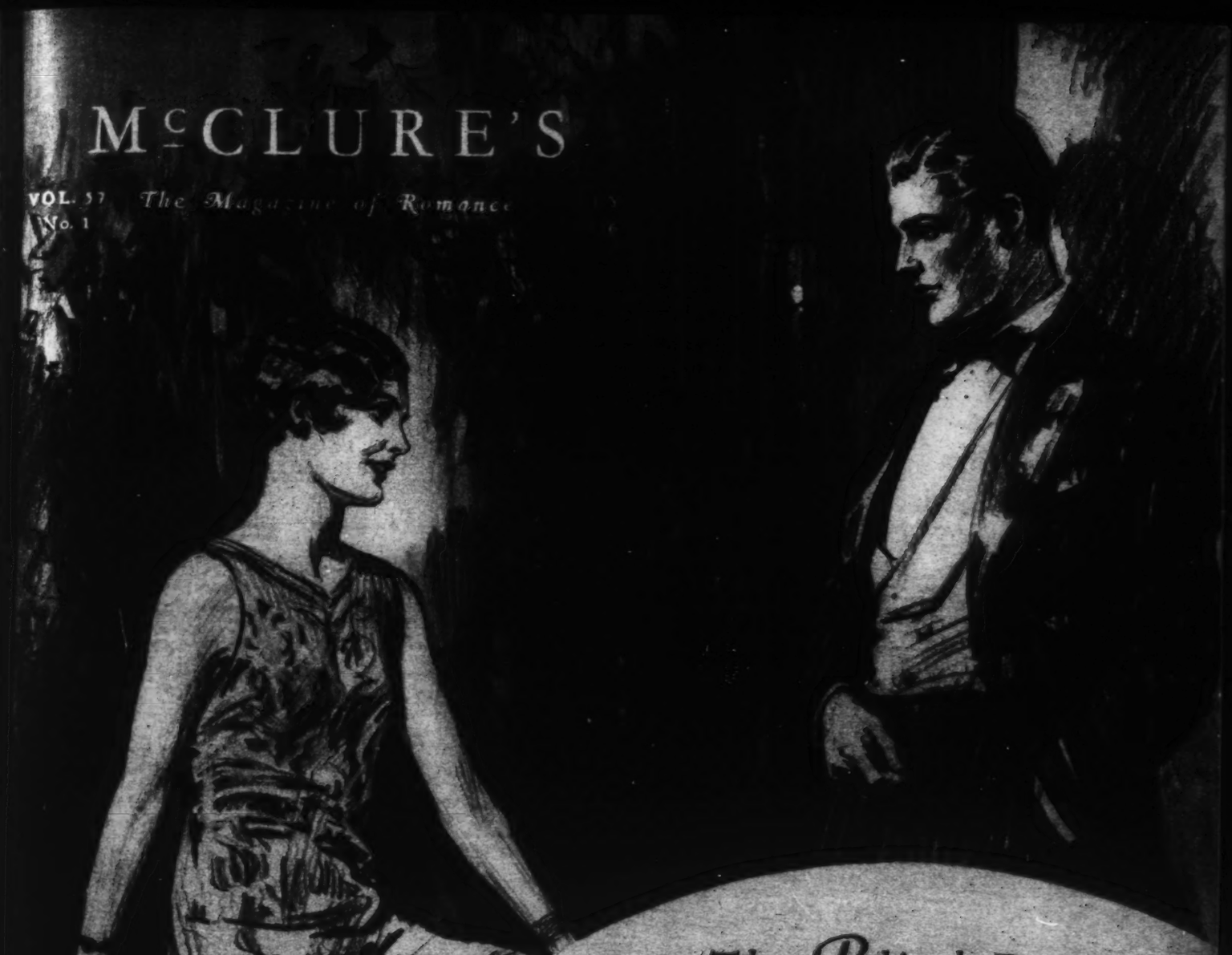


THEN I gave him a chance for a bit of romance.

ARTHUR WILLIAM BROWN

The Blind Date

By BERTON BRALEY

Drawing by Arthur William Brown

I HAD a blind date with a fellow named Nate
For a party the gang was to throw;
And I didn't know what kind of bimbo I'd got
Till I'd dolled up all ready to go.
Was he good, or all wet? Well, I couldn't tell yet,
Though his tux was the smartest I'd seen;
Still, it takes more than dress when you're trying to guess
At the stuff to expect from a bean.

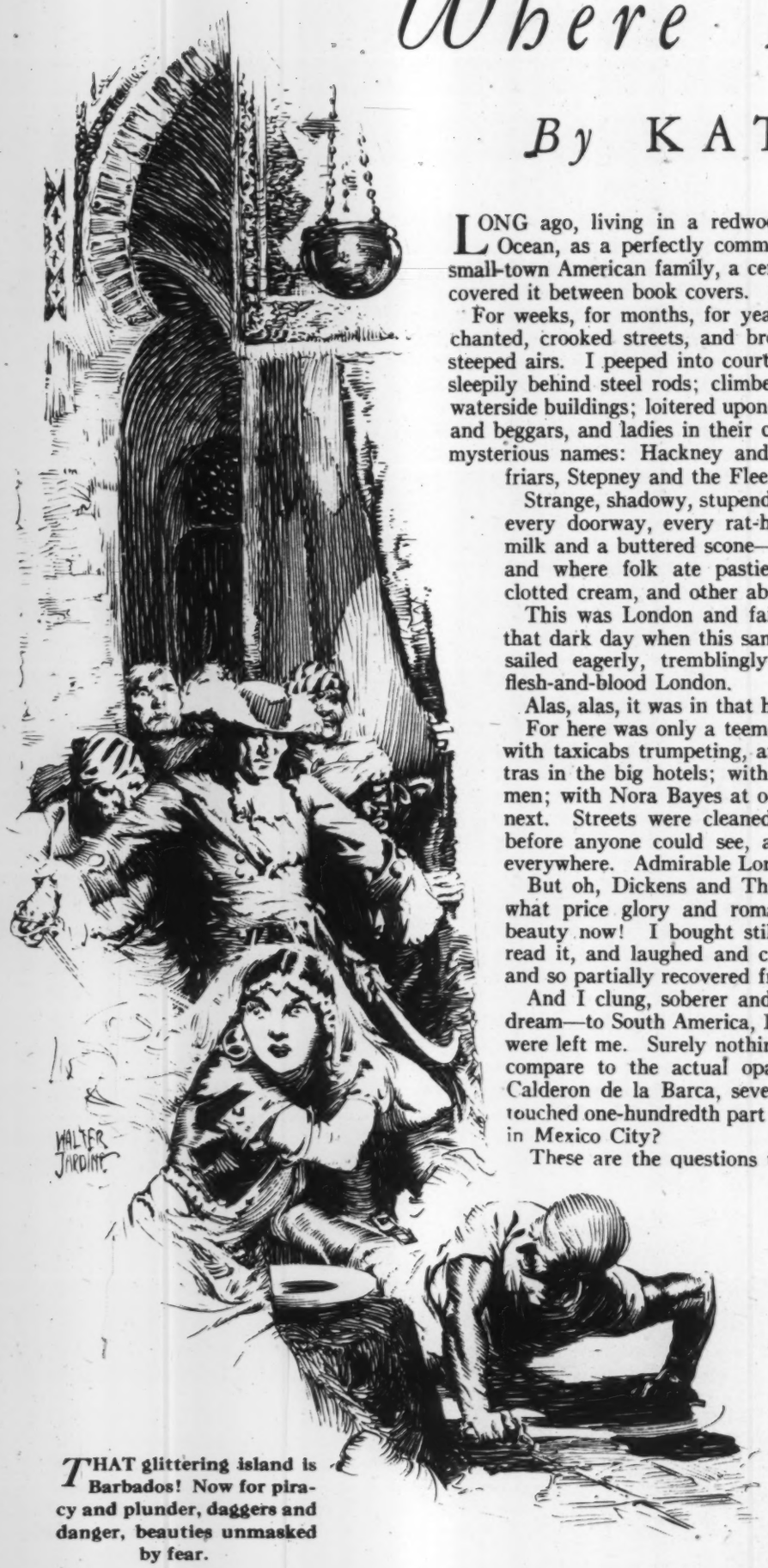
Well, he hoofed it O.K., and I couldn't just say
That his line wasn't clever enough;
But I happened to ask for a sip from his flask,
And he said, "I don't carry the stuff!"
Then I gave him a chance for a bit of romance
In a spot where the lighting was dim;
But that slow-going gent wouldn't neck worth a cent—
And I got no assistance from him.

He asked me—no joke—"Do you mind if I smoke?"
He apologized once, when he swore.
Going home in the dark, when I said, "Shall we park?"
Believe me, he asked me, "What for?"
Could I come to admire such a total flat tire,
Such an old-fashioned goof—and so good,
Who had treated me just like a vase that would bust?
Oh, baby! I'll say that I could!

Seek It in the South Seas, in Mexico, in Far

Where I Found

By KATHLEEN



THAT glittering island is Barbados! Now for piracy and plunder, daggers and danger, beauties unmasked by fear.

LONG ago, living in a redwood forest on the edge of the Western Ocean, as a perfectly commonplace member of a perfectly typical, small-town American family, a certain little girl discovered London. Discovered it between book covers. I was the little girl.

For weeks, for months, for years I walked old London's crowded, enchanted, crooked streets, and breathed their foggy, fish-scented, decay-steeped airs. I peeped into courts of Chancery, where coke fires winked sleepily behind steel rods; climbed creaking stairs in dark old tumbling waterside buildings; loitered upon filthy crossings with sweepers and hacks and beggars, and ladies in their coaches. All my days were colored with mysterious names: Hackney and Cheapside, Charing Cross and Blackfriars, Stepney and the Fleet!

Strange, shadowy, stupendous city, where every basement window, every doorway, every rat-hole had its story; where a pen'orth of milk and a buttered scone—what might a scone be?—were a feast; and where folk ate pasties and potted pigeon, periwinkles and clotted cream, and other absurdities only fit for fairyland.

This was London and fairyland in one, all the long years until that dark day when this same little girl, long grown to womanhood, sailed eagerly, tremblingly, expectantly to London—to the real flesh-and-blood London.

Alas, alas, it was in that hour that London was lost to me forever.

For here was only a teeming, interesting city in a world of cities, with taxicabs trumpeting, and expensive hors-d'oeuvres and orchestras in the big hotels; with theaters and electric lights and policemen; with Nora Bayes at one playhouse, and Mary Pickford at the next. Streets were cleaned properly now, in the early mornings before anyone could see, and there were sanitation and sunlight everywhere. Admirable London, enormously improved London.

But oh, Dickens and Thackeray, Trollope and Henry Kingsley, what price glory and romance, mystery and strange, enthralling beauty now! I bought still another copy of "Bleak House," and read it, and laughed and cried over it, on the boat coming home, and so partially recovered from the shock.

And I clung, soberer and less trustful, to what remained of the dream—to South America, India, Guatemala and far Cathay. These were left me. Surely nothing ever written by Lafcadio Hearn could compare to the actual opalescent beauty of Nagasaki; Madame Calderon de la Barca, seventy-five years ago, surely couldn't have touched one-hundredth part of the wonders one would find for oneself in Mexico City?

These are the questions the booklover's heart asks him fearfully when the ship's engines stop throbbing, and the unending circle of blue is broken by the outline of strange waterfronts, the rise of strangely-roofed cities and towers and tree-tops. Barbados! That blue and glittering island is Barbados. And now for piracy and plunder, daggers and danger, beauties unmasked by fear, galleons ruffling brown sails in the making wind, dubloons and pieces of eight!

"Now don't forget you're going to 'phone us, and we're going to have that bridge game!" says the jovial fellow-traveller on one's right, at the rail . . .

I hope to goodness we're going to be here long enough to get some laundry done!" murmurs the woman on the other side . . . "They say the hotel is

Cathay—Here's the Simple Secret of——

ROMANCE

NORRIS

jam-packed." "My dear, you'll let me write the chairman of our literary section that you'll give us a day in New York next winter?" "I've taken ten grains, and I'm nearly mad." "The one thing I *am* going to do is get those cottons for Mabel." "Here's a little girl so shy she doesn't dare ask for your autograph." "Now you *will* do that, won't you? Eight-nine-six-three South Southerland Boulevard, any time after March first." "Hello—hello—hello—here we are! My dear, we saw in the paper that you were on this boat. We've been here ten days, George is mad about the place! We've been making engagements for you in every direction! You're lunching with us, and to-night——"

Oh, Tomlinson of "The Sea and the Jungle," and O'Brien of "White Shadows"! Oh, master-hand that grew cold and still when Conrad died —where are you now?

Gone. Gone. Gone. The big ship rocks dully in the harbor, lights flash on the shore and flicker redly over the swarming, jostling slums, where there will be fighting and killing tonight—as there will be in London's Limehouse and San Francisco's Chinatown and New York's Harlem.

We will see all that frightful, fascinating region tomorrow . . . To-night we sit safely on the hotel veranda, drinking cool things out of long glasses, and occasionally looking out at the dark sea—but without comment. Everyone hates a chatty dummy.

Rather than this—a thousand times rather than this—let us have the shabby warmth and comfort of the sitting-room at home, the chair that two generations of readers have worn to easiness and softness, the green-shaded lamp that has been modeled to look like the old oil-burners of Dickens' day.

No hearts broken because one is going away from them to girdle the world; no unhappy remembrance of wistful, courageous smiles at parting; no anxious questing under unfamiliar skies for cables and home news; no incessant torturing longings: "How Jim would love this! If Mark were only here! Why *couldn't* they all come!"

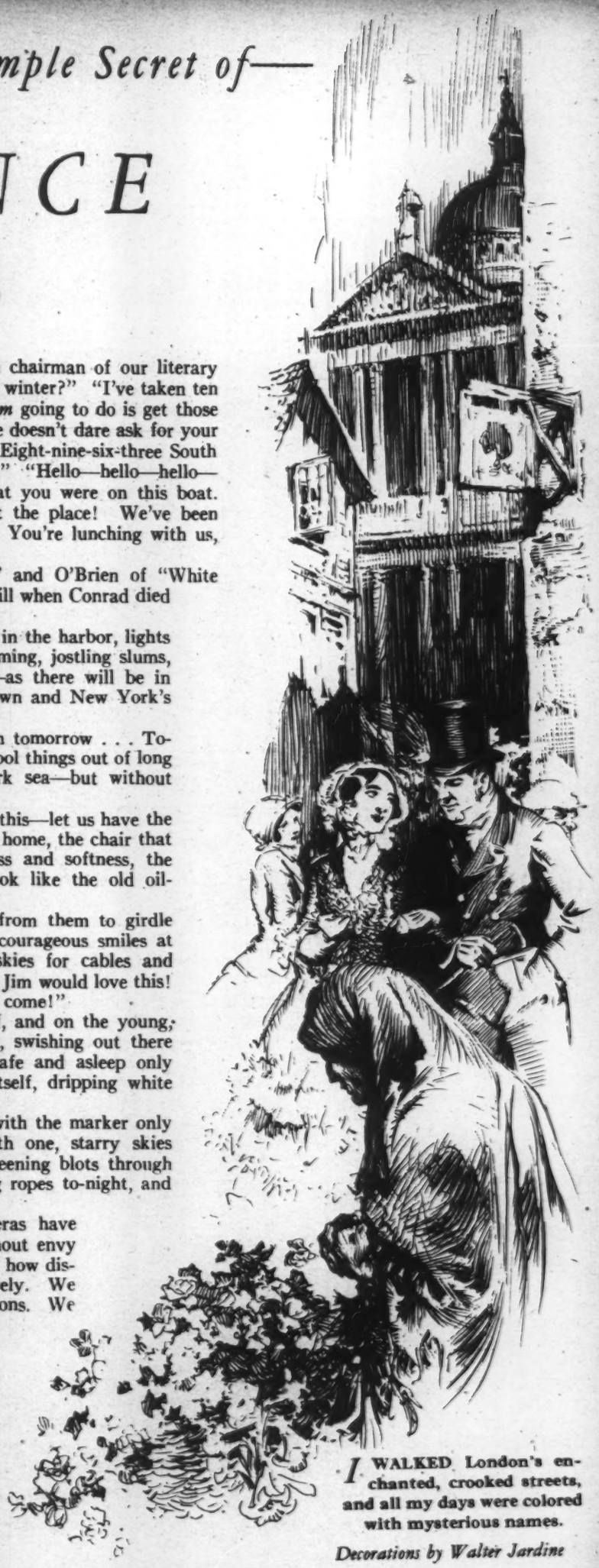
But, instead, the spring rain on one's own roof, and on the young, tight buds in the garden; the redwoods swishing, swishing out there somewhere in the dark; the children sprawled safe and asleep only two walls away; and the wood fire talking to itself, dripping white bay sap into white bay ashes.

To-night, let us reach for that fat green book with the marker only half-way through. To-night choppy seas beneath one, starry skies reeling overhead, white spindrift racing by in careening blots through the black dark. Whistling of winds and straining ropes to-night, and the banging of a loosened hatch.

Travelers of the world, whose eyes and cameras have captured so much of its glory, we salute you without envy for what you have done. We know just how tame, how disillusioning were the adventures that read so bravely. We know about the lost tickets, the boresome companions. We know that you found the blackness of the impenetrable inner temple trimly lighted by electricity; we know that only by the grace of Thomas Cook and Son did you paddle on the Nile; we know that in the trackless jungle, where never foot of man had trod, you picked up hairpins and sardine cans.

But if you can write about it romantically, we will love you. Your adventures mean nothing to us unless you can make them live again.

Marco Polo, the traveler, we respect indeed. But our first toast of obligation must always go to Scheherezade, the romancer!



I WALKED London's enchanted, crooked streets, and all my days were colored with mysterious names.

Decorations by Walter Jardine

The Story of a GIRL
who staked her
Whole Destiny
on the hazards of a
Single Day

By the Author

HOT

THE FAMILY car was hers for the morning.

She drove first to the town's only beauty parlor, where she sat regal and impatient while one woman shampooed and waved her hair and another trimmed and polished her fingernails. When the job was done she sat up and looked at herself, long and intently, from all angles, as if she were appraising separately the effect of each year in her total of twenty.

Miss Shane, whose reflection stood beside hers in the mirror, was a terrifying advertisement of her own arts at their worst. Her blondined hair was permanently waved into a semblance of moulded brass; her eyebrows were pulled into fine black lines; her face looked enamelled white and pink; her nails were long, pointed and stained bright red, like talons daintily dipped in gore . . . She certainly would ruin you if you let her, Ruth reflected. You had to know just when to stop her . . .

"You look lovely, dearie," Miss Shane purred.

She said that to every customer, but she might have meant it this time, Ruth thought. Hungrily she stared at her own bright young image, drawing from it courage for her great effort.

Her hair was fine, abundant, light-red and bobbed. Washed and fluffed it shone in a beam of sunlight, seeming live as flame. Her skin had the same bright freshness, save for a spatter of freckles across her nose, and her eyes were bright blue. A shining vividness, suggesting intense, undaunted life, she had at her best. And she was at her best this morning. The fact filled her with a warmth of hope and confidence.

She glanced down at her

Because she lost her first beau, Ruth carried as a handicap

of "Women and Wives," "Capitol Hill," etc.

—HARVEY FERGUSSON

SATURDAY

the town's subtle explanations of how she came to lose him.

nails. Polished and perfect, with new-moon tips, but no pink on them because it fought with her hair . . .

"Two seventy-five." She fished futilely in her bag, among vanity cases, lip-sticks, handkerchiefs, door keys, and small change. She was mildly embarrassed.

"I haven't got it with me, Miss Shane. Will you trust me till Monday?"

"Sure I will, dearie. I know your dad gives you whatever you want."

Miss Shane always got in something like that—didn't know her place. But you had to be polite to her, had to keep your credit good here if nowhere else . . .

"Thank you so much, Miss Shane!" Her voice was a gentle coo. She was always polite except when she lost her temper.

"Don't mention it, dearie . . . Good-bye . . . and good luck!"

Ruth shot her a quick look, anger just below the surface. What did she mean by good luck? The woman seemed to know everything . . . Well, who wouldn't, running a beauty parlor? And a warmth of real friendliness shone in Miss Shane's eyes. Ruth's irritation died.

"Thank you, Miss Shane."

She was out on the street again, starting the car, glancing at her wrist-watch. Quarter of eleven. Time for a little ride before lunch.

If she could get the car she always went for a ride alone when life seemed impossible, and when, as now, she wanted to think and plan. Riding alone seemed to stimulate her mind and release it. She could never think at home.

She picked her way deftly through the business section, throwing a bright smile at the town's only traffic cop by way of insurance. Out on the state road she settled low in her seat and stepped on the gas with a sigh of relief. Wind rippled round the windshield and tickled her neck like delicate fingers. The car sent through her body a vaguely voluptuous tremor and the engine sang

to her sweetly. Its drone rested her turbulent spirit.

Now what she wanted to do was to think—to plan her Saturday shrewdly, completely. And instead of plans she got only bright visions of triumph. This thing she longed for daringly, hoped for against a hundred perils, her imagination insisted on treating as a thing achieved. It leapt across difficulties and preliminaries to the heart of her desire. Briefly she hummed the wedding march and saw herself in a billow of lace and tulle and orange blossoms, marching to victory . . . Then . . . New York . . . That was where they would live, she knew, and that was the home of her dream. She had never been there, never been East. In her mind it was vague and glorious as a believer's conception of heaven. It was all the elements of her ideal of beauty piled together in shining abundance. It was everything she lacked and longed for. It was money, light, speed, clothes, people—innumerable, astonishing people she had never met before, moving gracefully through an endless round of pleasure. It was acres of shops in which to roam and buy . . . Above all, it was music.

SHE ran ahead of Walt—far away from everyone she led him.

Whenever she thought of New York she thought of music and especially of opera. Music was the art to which she thrilled—the thing that discovered the rhythms of life to her and lifted her out of its agonies. She was always music-hungry. And music to her meant both jazz and opera.

Jazz filled her with the devil, made her want to kick high and show the world what pretty legs she had. Jazz was the music of abandon. But opera appealed to what her mother called her better nature. It made her feel sad and glorious. All the operatic airs that she could get she had played over and over on the phonograph until she knew them by heart—the prison song from Il Trovatore, the love duet from Tristan and Isolde, the sextette from Lucia. They always stirred in her a warm upwelling lump of longing for—she didn't know what. They were rich voices full of tears and passion calling to her from some home of her soul which she might never find. When she was low and lonely they sometimes made her weep, and when her energy was high they drove her to lift up her own powerful contralto to the consternation of the neighbors . . . A few years before they had sometimes inspired a vision of herself standing in a glare of light before a multitude, moving it with her voice to crashing applause . . .

The dream of being a singer had faded, but the dream of hearing great singers in the flesh was bright in her imagination now. And she was still the center of the picture, seated in a box at the Metropolitan, wearing a green gown that held the bare beauty of her back and shoulders as the calyx holds a tea-rose bud. A rope of pearls hung to the cleft in her bosom and her hair was a red-golden radiance constrained by a simple fillet set with diamonds . . . Darkness swallowed her . . . Music poured up and through her . . . A man sat at her elbow—a tall, powerful, rather sinister-looking man with shiny black hair and heavy black eyebrows. At every pause in the music he whispered to her, his voice hoarse and urgent. She could feel his breath on her bare back. She smiled, a little disdainfully . . .

A strip of red carpet laid across a sidewalk under an awning—that was an item in her every vision of the opulent elegance for which she yearned. Over a strip of red carpet under an awning one walked to glory . . .

Through crowded metropolitan streets, where colored lights leapt and shimmered, she drove in a custom-built limousine with a man in plum-colored livery on the driver's seat. She could see herself in the lighted coach, wearing a turquoise-blue evening wrap with a great white feather collar. Across the red carpet came a liveried man to open the door of her car. Graceful and exquisite, she descended—entered a great ball-room, filled with men and women in evening dress, who turned to look—people who knew nothing about her except how beautiful she was . . . A world of new people, strange people . . . A world of handsome eager men with money . . .

The speedometer caught her eye, brought her suddenly back to here and now. Forty-five miles an hour, it warned. Without realizing it she had been going faster and faster, as though

her dream had been a visible, tangible thing she chased.

She slowed down, feeling foolish and irritated. What an idiot she was to kid herself that way! Her imagination was always running away with her. She wanted to think about difficulties, not dream about successes . . . Even if she could manage him, there was his family . . . Good thing his mother had died.

Mothers of men were her natural enemies. They almost never liked her. A father would be easier.

But the worst danger was right here at home—what people would tell him about her. He was such an innocent, he would believe anything and he would be awfully easy to shock . . . "Darling, when you are all mine, you will know" . . . No, you couldn't talk that way to that kind of a man . . . Oh, if he only wasn't such a boob!

And was he really as interested as she thought? What was she building all these hopes upon? She had seen him only twice and never alone except in the car on the street. It was just the way he had looked at her. That was not much, and yet—never had she felt so sure of anyone . . .

The eyes of men were her study. She knew the sly enquiring look of wise woman-seeking men, and even better the look of men who are afraid—the look with hatred under it. And she knew the look of the man who has fallen wholly in love—the wide-eyed worshipful look of pure illusion, of dream and desire.

He crawled out of the water and sat down, feeling washed of woe and desire.

It had shone in *his* eyes that first evening on the front porch when he brought the letter of introduction to her mother. She had prepared for his coming and she knew she was looking her best, all in white. It was dusk enough so that her freckles didn't show.

She didn't say much. For one thing she was too surprised. He was too entirely different from what she had expected. A youth of metropolitan elegance, sophisticated, perhaps a little supercilious, she had imagined him. And for no good reason she had thought of him as tall and dark, with heavy black eyebrows—a rather devilish-looking fellow. She had been prepared to find him a little stuck-up and to convince him that small town people were not always as slow as he thought . . .

She had *not* been prepared to meet a great gawky boy, blushing and perspiring with embarrassment, hopelessly encumbered by his own hands and feet. She knew he was a year older than herself because Mrs. Calder had written that he had just come into that half million when he was twenty-one, but he seemed younger because he was so shy and had such a childish-looking mouth.

She didn't know what to say, so she let her mother do the difficult talking and just smiled at him when he looked her way. And he looked her way most of the time after the first few minutes, as though he had never seen a girl before. When he stood on the porch saying good-bye he stammered in bedazzled confusion . . . Her disappointment had given way to a glowing sense of power.

Then he came to Sunday dinner, and that was awful. She remembered it with pain. It was hot as sin and she felt her nose getting shiny and her neck getting red. Heat was just what her looks couldn't stand. She always looked too hot anyway, with her red hair and high color. She sat there smiling with her teeth when she would have liked to curse and weep. Dad looked like a hick with his purple necktie, and told moth-eaten jokes about two travelling men. Annie, the little pest, kept piping up with something about a stomach ache and finally had to be sent from the table. The chicken was dry, the California strawberries were tasteless, the whipped cream simply lay down and perished in its dish . . . Juliana, the Mexican maid, had to be coached and scolded . . . And he must have been used to butlers and wonderful food and everything spiffy. He certainly didn't act like a man that had ever been anywhere, but with half a million dollars back of him he must have been used to a good deal of swank . . .

There was no doubt about the money, though. Everybody knew the shoe-polish Faddens had it, and he was an only child. They did say the old man had worked right up from the bottom, so maybe they were not very tony, after all . . .

Anyway he didn't seem to notice anything except her. He sat and stared at her most of the time, and hardly talked at all. He seemed a perfect dumb-bell. And yet they said he was a shark in something or other—industrial chemistry, she thought. He did try to explain something about alkaloids, and that killed off what little conversation there was, because of course nobody else knew anything about them, and he looked as though he would like to slide under the table and die of embarrassment.

It was awful, but he came through it with that same worshipping look in his eyes. And if he could stand that dinner and the family he could stand a lot.

Afterward they went for a drive and that was better. He perked up and talked a little, and he saw the town and seemed interested. Incidentally the town saw him—with her. Everybody went driving on Sunday afternoon. She had felt proud and elated at the time, but now she wished not so many people knew about him . . . Well, there was no help for that. They would have to find out sooner or later.

. . . The main idea was to show him a good time today. He was supposed to like outdoor life and outdoors was where she shone. She was strong and graceful and wasn't afraid of snakes and didn't have to be dragged around . . . Show him a good time and if possible get him alone . . . That was why she hadn't invited anyone but Alma and Doc Jaggers. Mother would hold down Annie; the Doc's lung wouldn't let him go far and Alma would probably stay with the Doc . . .

SHE glanced at her wrist-watch. Quarter of twelve. And she had forgotten to order stuffed olives and she had to go by the Budlong's and tell Alma what time they were going to start. She slowed down, went into low and turned.

At the top of Hairpin Hill she stopped a moment, partly to let the engine cool and partly because she always stopped here when she was alone.

The spot was marked "Scenic" on the Chamber of Commerce road maps. On her retina it was a vague, familiar blur of blue and purple mountain, yellowish plain, green valley stitched with silver river. She was not much aware of it as a view, but she liked the sense of lift and isolation the place gave her, and the cooling wind that always blew over there. It brought her a moment of peace and self-sufficiency.

She could remember when this place had been a long day's journey from town over sandy roads in a buck-board. Life was slow in those days before they had cars. A hundred miles were no more to her than ten had been to her parents when she was born. Where they had crawled she flew. But she flew nowhere, she merely circled. She came back no less surely to this place that owned her life . . .

FOR a few minutes her thought hung suspended, as she was, far above the world she lived in. She was aware only of color, sunlight and the pleasant relaxation of her healthy young body as she stretched her legs and arms. Then the town reached up and touched her—called her back. Stuffed olives. Alma Budlong. Twelve o'clock. She started the car, her brows drawing down a point of concentration and purpose.

With easy confidence she zig-zagged down the hill, ignoring signs. "Slow down," they warned. "Sound your horn." She knew every inch of the way and she was wholly without physical fear. Every year a few tourists—numbers of them went through on their way to California—broke their necks here; burned out brake bands and went over the edge at one of the sharp turns. Some people were awful fools. Nothing like that would ever happen to her. That was her feeling about all the physical perils of life. Terrible things happened, but not to her.

Down a long slope she sped toward the valley, making a frightened jack rabbit and flying birds look slow. She was in a hurry now. The town ran to meet her with signs stuck on trees and fences, painted on barns. Garages, hotels, restaurants, camp grounds, stores all clamored for the incoming dollars. A stranger could have compiled a fair business directory of the town before he got within ten miles of it. The biggest sign of all was the one put up by the Chamber of Commerce, saying "Welcome" on one side and "Good-bye, God bless you" on the other. Beneath this on both sides was the boast and prophecy—fifty thousand people by 1928.

They would never make it, she knew. That line was Barney Gobel's idea. He claimed they had thirty thousand now, but the census only gave them twenty. The rest, he said, was outside the city limits.

The place was growing though. She felt pride in the fact that she could remember when there wasn't a house out here. What had been old man Greenleaf's cow-pasture five years ago was Cottonwood Grove Addition now, laid off in streets with tiny trees planted and fragile wooden houses springing up like mushrooms after rain.

A horn sounded behind her and a car hummed by, with the sweet even voice of effortless speed. It was a huge limousine with balloon tires and a liveried man on the driver's seat. She glimpsed men and women smartly dressed, motor caps and veils—swell people from the East on their way to the coast in their own car. She could see the New York license plate. Suddenly she felt small, inferior and resentful bumping along in the old Buick. She glared at the rear of the passing car, stepped on the gas and tried to catch it. No use. It was too fast for her. It looked like a foreign make and was doing better than fifty without seeming to try.

. . . Have a car like that maybe. She pictured herself rolling into town in it, dressed in a gray English homespun travelling suit, gray suede shoes and a fine abundant gray veil a floating cloud about her head. They would stay just a few days, give a tea and invite everybody. Then on to the coast, three hundred miles a day, stopping every night at big resort hotels, full of smart people and music . . . San Francisco, Los Angeles, Yosemite, Santa Catalina, Tia Juana. The words sang a comforting melody in her mind.

She turned down Seventh Street, grateful for the shade of old far-reaching cottonwoods that filled the air with their gossamer-winged seed and piled them in filmy drifts along the curb. This was the oldest and most respectable residence street in the town. Here the aristocracy of business men and lawyers who came in with the railroad had built their houses almost half a century before.

The Budlong place was one of the oldest and made no shift to hide the fact. It was a tall square frame, unmistakably of the eighties, with a wide pillared porch shedding in flakes the last of many coats of blue paint. Its sagging corner and failing picket fence, its ancient woody lilac bushes and dying apple trees told the world that something in this town had been dignified and respectable long enough to get rotten.

CHAPTER II

DIMLY, through a screen of vine, Ruth could see old Judge Budlong on the porch in a rocker with a newspaper in his lap. He looked to be asleep, she thought, as she crossed the yard, but her foot on the steps brought forth a deep rich boom of welcome.

Drawings by George Van Werveke

Before the railroad came, it was a frontier town of cowboys, prospectors, dance halls and saloons.

When he stood on the porch saying good-bye her disappointment gave way to a glowing sense of power.

"Howdeedoo, Miss Ruth . . . Alma ought to be here any time now. Sit down, my girl."

"Don't get up, Judge, and don't let me disturb you. I'll just look at this paper."

"You look mighty charming today, Miss Ruth. You're a good sight for old eyes."

"Thank you, Judge."

She gave him a shining smile. His eyes, brightening, travelled her eagerly from ankle up.

The old devil! They said he was a terror in the early days when he was young and the town was wide open. It was hard to imagine, looking at him now, and especially hard for her because she could not remember him except as an old man.

He had closed his eyes again. He looked weary—yellow and shrivelled—good as dead. He didn't have a dollar now, they said. Alma kept him going on her salary as librarian. It was lucky for him she hadn't married.

His hands caught and held Ruth's eyes. Dangling, yellow, all vein and tendon, they were like dead limbs on a dying tree, those hands that once had clutched at love and power. She looked [*Continued on page 76*]

By Shirley Siefert

HILDEGARDE

"I can't afford two peach melbas!" said Ray. "Can't you understand I'm poor, Bernadine, downright poor!"

NEVER in the world had anybody seen a worse-looking automobile. You could hardly be sure it was that. It came of that large family of vehicles about which tin roof jokes are cracked, and it was a disgrace to its relatives. It was humiliation to Raymond—Raymond, son of Thaddeus Graves, who made sleek, fat limousines. But Raymond, too, had been disowned by his family. He had hardly any money in his pocket. He had to have a car. So he came to possess Hildegarde.

"You see," he confided to the dealer, "it's no use trying to keep a date with a girl nowadays unless you own a machine."

Even the anxious dealer had to laugh. Hildegarde had been spunky enough in her day. But now she was blistered, scarred, and wrinkled, where dents had been rubbed out; very down in the nose; and her top might have been either snatched off by a cyclone or sawed off with a can-opener.

"You wait," said Ray, "till I bring her around in a couple of weeks."

"Will *she* wait two weeks?" asked the dealer.

"She's out of town." Ray had an open nature. "But I've the first night after she gets back. Hm! Here's your fifty! Phew! Spends hard. Can I push her home, do you reckon, or had I better bring a wheelbarrow?"

"She'll run."

She did run, with sundry snorts and gurglings and grindings, to the remote corner of the city where Ray had found refuge in the house of a widow whose children had all married and left her, who liked Ray because he was always so cheerful, whistling, and all. To Hildegarde the widow granted space in the woodshed.

"It is good you get a machine," she said. "Such long rides on the street-cars every day are not so good."

"That isn't it, Mrs. Krehl," said Ray. "I've got a girl who likes to ride."

"Oh! You got a girl? Now I see why you whistle and sing so much! A working girl?"

"Bernadine? Work? I should say not, never worked—anything but suckers like me." Ray took off his cap and spoke to the blue afternoon sky. "At that, she's a wonder. Gee, Mrs. Krehl, you never saw anybody like Bernadine. Can I tell you about her? I've about busted for want of somebody to rave to."

Ray was good to look at, medium-tall, sinewy, and brown—both qualities until lately due to country club athletics—boyishly young. But his eyes were the best. Blue eyes, darkened by long black lashes that his mother would have adored, had he known a mother, and twinkling with lights unquenchable.

"Yah!" said Mrs. Krehl. "You tell me."

for LUCK

—about a GIRL with a Peach Melba Taste, and a BOY with a Plain Soda Income

"Well, sir! She's about so high and so wide." He measured off ridiculous smallness with his hands. "A little bit of a thing, you know. You just want to pick her up and put her into your pocket. But you'd have a hard time doing it. She's as snappy as a coiled spring."

"Is she got light hair?" suggested Mrs. Krehl.

"No. Black hair, black eyes and pink cheeks and a mouth—a mouth——" Ray gave up speech and went off into a whistle.

"And she is rich?"

"Yep!"

"And you are poor!"

"I'll say I am. Hildegarde took my last copper."

"What you call—Hildegarde?"

"My car! I always call my cars Hildegarde. It brings luck."

"Such a foolishness you always got! But why you hang around a rich girl like that? It makes you such a sadness sometime."

"Make a sadness, nothing! Make a gladness, Mrs. Krehl! Like this!" He released his spirits in a yodel.

"She like you, eh?"

"I don't know." He assumed a mien nearly sober.

"But I figure this is the test. If she does like me, she'll like me just as well without money as with it. If she cares more for money than for me I don't want—yes, I do, but I can't have her, and she won't have me, and you see how it is!"

"Yah! So right away you go and buy an automobile to make her think you got some money anyhow. That's the way it starts, the sadness."

Ray looked at his purchase.

"Hildegarde wouldn't deceive anyone," he declared.

Mrs. Krehl shook her head heavily.

"I know," she said, "you are in love!"

"Mrs. Krehl," said Ray, solemnly clasping one of her fat hands in his, "you have guessed my secret!"

"Ach!" Mrs. Krehl pulled her hand free and gave him a push. "Such a foolishness! Will you have a drink then?"

Ray's father shouted over Hildegarde. He said she proved Ray's ability.

She made a terrible brew which she called "*heimgemacht.*"

"I'll tell you what," suggested Ray. "Let's christen Hildegarde instead."

"Such a foolishness!" said Mrs. Krehl to herself, on retiring that night. A tender smile illuminated her heavy face. "If that girl could see now what I see; but girls ain't got that much sense. Such a foolishness!"

SO, IN extreme old age, was Hildegarde cast for an important rôle in a romantic drama. She was all Ray's possessions at the time. He had been cast out into the world a short while before, penniless, his only inheritance a curt recommendation in writing for a trial as an automobile mechanic. The idea was that if he found out the processes of making and repairing cars, he'd appreciate them more in the future. If there was a future for him—a thing his father loudly and angrily doubted.

The outburst was the climax of an ascending series of parental rages which had discolored Raymond's youth. Raymond was extravagant, reckless, impulsive. He knew. He was contrite, but he was never given a chance to explain anything. It did seem rotten that a chap who got on so well with everybody else couldn't hit it off with his father. Take this last affair. He had wrecked an eight thousand dollar limousine on a rainy night. He liked to take out the big car so that he could cart a whole bunch around with him. When he was driving home, after a magnificent evening, a little poodle dog had appeared in the middle of a boulevard. One of these silly, helpless little pups, you know, bewildered by the rain and the lights. Raymond's car was almost on it one minute. The next minute Raymond's car, his father's property, of course, was wreckage on a stone wall. The poodle dog was quite safe. Raymond was only jarred. But the car, the damn show-case, was spoiled. That was all that mattered. All other evidence was barred by the court, a heavy, ponderous man with contempt

for his only son. He pronounced sentence harshly:

"Now get to work!" said Ray's father. "And, when you've earned and saved the price of one car out of the four you've wrecked, come back and we'll talk."

"I'll go to work all right," said Raymond. "And I'll pay you what I owe you. But I'll never come back, never, till you send for me! Good-bye!"

But then, there was Bernadine. Bernadine Kaime. He'd met her only that last evening at a dance.

Just a frothy little thing was Bernadine, but somehow she got him. It was the lightness of her in his arms, a something almost intangible about her. Spoiled, arbitrary as the dickens, but the prettiest, cutest little trick he'd ever seen. Costly. He examined at once into her tastes and preferences, instantly determining on an intensive campaign for her possession. She adored peach melbas.. She adored his lovely automobile. She adored candy and flowers. Rich, expensive candy. And she'd rather have one orchid than a whole garden of carnations. Ray found her tastes eminently fitting for so exquisite a person!

"When can I see you again?" he whispered into her ear during the last dance. "To-morrow?"

"A month from to-morrow."

"Oh, say!"

"Unless you want to come to Canada."

"I can do that, too. What's the address?"

"You'd better not. Father always drags us off to the wilderness for a month, and he won't have young men around."

"No young men?"

"Not a one."

"That sounds safe. How about the first evening after you're back? And will you answer my letters and say just when? Please—darling!"

Now! Made a sadness? Made a gladness? Both. But he would keep his date. With the help of Hildegarde. For two weeks he worked on Hildegarde, learning more about the insides of a car than he dreamed cars could hold, and painting the exterior.

Painting was a problem. It was useless to pretend that enamel could give Hildegarde caste. Her contour was gone. He looked at her sadly, honestly, as a mother might look at a homely daughter whom she has educated and trained carefully, but who is still, on the eve of her debut, a homely daughter. Ray had the motor purring like a kitten. That gave him pride. But he knew that, unless he gave Hildegarde some special charm, Bernadine would look at her once and say: "In that case, why not call up some of the crowd and have an evening at home?" Or however Bernadine might choose to wreck that precious date. Ray's idea was, of course, to carry Bernadine off from that crowd and have her to himself one whole, telling evening. If the evening were not telling, he was as big a dumb-head as his father supposed.

Drawing by R. W. Woolman

Then all at once he knew he was being pursued.

It was the inspiration of despair that made Raymond finally buy paint and enamel in shades of blue and pink. The upper portions of Hildegarde he rendered in a delicate, blushing rose; the fenders and wheels he painted azure!

"Oh, my, my," said Mrs. Krehl, torn between genuine admiration and a suspicion that this was not ordinary.

Rather hysterical over his handiwork, Ray lifted a small brush from a blue bucket and printed across the back, "Body by Graves!" That was rather pathetic bravado, a small boy sassing the parent whom he, more than any other, might have worshiped.

On a slumberous July evening, while it was yet daylight, in this equipage he went to keep his date with Bernadine. And he whistled and whistled, while dressing, while running over the streets with people staring—and not smiling only because, when they got through being astonished, he was out of sight and they didn't believe their eyes. But when he came near to Bernadine's house, he hushed.

FOR he was really in love with this girl. He was to-night as fair a young man as any maid might like to look upon. Mrs. Krehl had pressed the suit in which he had left his father's house—his only suit. He had cleaned and groomed himself as for some kind of consecration. He would have had in any case his inches and his young strength and his healthy tan and his remarkable eyes that would have stirred a dead woman, lit up as they were with adoration. Yet, this strong, good-looking young man trembled before Bernadine, a very small lady with crinkly black hair and mischief eyes and a contradictory, sweet mouth, who lurked on a veranda behind a clematis trellis, and who had obviously been waiting and watching there for this Raymond Graves. There was a moment of high-voltage silence when they faced each other. Then:

"Hello!" said Bernadine, with a fine pretense of casualness.

"Hello," said Ray, "—sweetheart!"

His voice shook a little. Weeks of waiting, then a flashing vision of this girl in the flesh, had made almost unconquerable his desire to catch her up to his heart, pin her there, paste her there, keep her there somehow, forever.

"The idea!" said Bernadine, a distressingly old-style pinkness creeping over her face. "The idea! You may, if you like, call me Bernadine."

"I do," said Ray, "Bernadine."

"Hm! I don't like the way you say it." Little liar! "Perhaps it had better be Miss Kaime."

"I couldn't—darling!"

"Good gracious! What will I do with you all evening?"

"You promised to have dinner with me."

"Well, let's start. Where's your car?"

They were now out from behind the clematis screen. Hildegarde's play.

"There!" Ray felt a blush on his cheeks, but he held his head up. "Bernadine, meet Hildegarde!"

"Hilde — why, I never saw anything like that in my life, Raymond Graves!"

She ran down the walk. Ray followed her, quite miserable with suspense. Hildegarde was ridiculous, in fact. Still, parked there in the sunset glow, she had an odd humility, demureness, appeal. He'd become terribly attached to his prank. Bernadine walked around her and felt the effect, too. Bernadine's face became tender. Ray could have eaten her when, on reading the letters in back, she laughed.

"You rascal!" she said to Ray, who came down at once into the gutter beside her. "Do we ride in this?"

Ray caught her arm under his.

"I dare you!" he urged, [*Continued on page 88*]

By HELEN TOPPING MILLER

Drums in a White Glare

They Beat a Dirge of HATE in One Woman's Heart—but a Song of LOVE in Another's

"O Brant——how can I——when I don't know who I am?" Janvi was half hysterical again.

THEY had been sitting by the fire for an hour in Northrup's old New England home when the quick queer silence cut in.

Silences were not unusual when Northrup and Brant Gilvey sat looking into fires. Often in the Atacama country in the raw chill of desert nights, embers glowing, half drunken *rotoes* snoring under tent flaps, there had been silences: the companionable silence of men who understand. Often they had ridden stirrup to stirrup, mules grunting, through the blazing white dust which drifts where the Andes drink the tradewinds dry—ridden for hours with never a word spoken.

Silence is a hallmark of friendship and these two had been friends for years though Northrup was sixty past and Brant Gilvey just turned thirty. But this silence which beat even through the howling November storm was different. Empty. Hostile. A stillness of the sort that makes men's hair rise slowly.

Brant's difficult question had launched it suddenly—made the air taut with a stillness keen as a cry. For days he had bitten back the flaming leap of that question, ever since the pulse-arresting moment when he had realized that he was falling in love with the gold brown girl he had found here in Northrup's house. But now it was out and there came after it a hush that drained every familiar sound.

"North, who is Janvi?"

A log had fallen sharply. The air grew hollow, strange.

"North?" Brant's voice rang a trifle high. There was no answer, no movement from the big chair by the fire. Never before such a silence between these friends.

"North!" Brant leaped up, panic catching at his throat.

Northrup sat relaxed, easy, his small white mustache as jaunty as ever, the fold of flesh over his collar warm and pink. Only his hands looked unusual, spread out lumpily over his knees.

"North!" Brant shook him. "North!" Northrup's head rolled a little—from his throat came a queer weak bubbling. Brant turned icy cold.

Northrup was dead.

Frantically he rubbed the hands, slapped the still warm pulseless wrists. But he knew it was no use. North was gone. Sweat stood out on his own face. Lord, how quick! Like a candle blown out! Appalling to be alert one instant, flipping ashes into a fire, eyes keen, mouth quizzical, brain humming like a dynamo and then—like that—away—nobody knew where!

Northrup's eyes were open, not glazed or strange, merely a little dim; eyes which had seen the world as few men see it. They should be closed of course but Brant could not do it. Arrogantly North had loved life, taken it in his hands, chosen what he would of it. Now Brant could not shut it out. A world of glorious fights, of doing things men declared could not be done, of adventuring—of women!

An old inhibiting heaviness came over Brant. Janvi! Who was she, this girl like summer dusk with eyes of

mystery, soft voice and quick brown hands? What was she doing in Northrup's house, a house of many successive mistresses?

Suddenly Brant found himself hating this dead old man who had been his friend. He dropped a limp hand beside its mate where it lay pitifully, palm upturned.

"What is she—to you?" he demanded furiously. His voice came like a bark, startling his own ears.

Then the cold finality of death steadied him again, brought the habited reserve into his eyes, left him as always quiet and grave and quick.

Some one must be called. The November storm was swirling past the windows, wailing desolately on doorsills. Strange how death came in on such a night, riding the storm.

Brant searched the telephone book. He was alone in the house, alone for that matter in the town so far as acquaintance went. He knew no one but Janvi. He found a doctor's number in Northrup's neighborhood; called and explained. The doctor, whose name was Lyon, would come over immediately.

"Don't trouble to call an undertaker," Lyon added. "I'll attend to that."

Brant felt a queer helplessness. Of course there were things to be done, stark things that belonged to death, but he was uncertain how to go about them. He had known little of death even though he had lived most of his solitary years on the ragged edge of life. He thought of Janvi. She would have to be told. He had no idea where she was. Out with some friends, Northrup had said.

He sat down again by the fire numbly. The room was weirdly still and already the sweet earthly smell of death was there. North's hair moved a little in the heat as Brant often had seen it stir out on the Atacama beside the little fires they built against the cold of nights. Brant stared at the softly moving fuzz. A dryness came into his mouth and the silence of the room froze him. He was shaking with a cold nausea when steps rangs on the walk. The doctor had come, an iron gray man with a pleasant voice. Two other strangers were with him.

Doctor Lyon's eyes and fingers were swift. He had touched a swollen vein on Northrup's temple, pressed the eyelids down, before Brant could stammer an explanation.

"You were alone with him?"

Brant nodded.

"We've been expecting this—those of us who knew him," Lyon went on. There was a decanter on the mantel. He poured a stiff drink. "Better down this," he said to Brant. "Jars a man a bit—seeing somebody go out like that. I'd sit down if I were you."

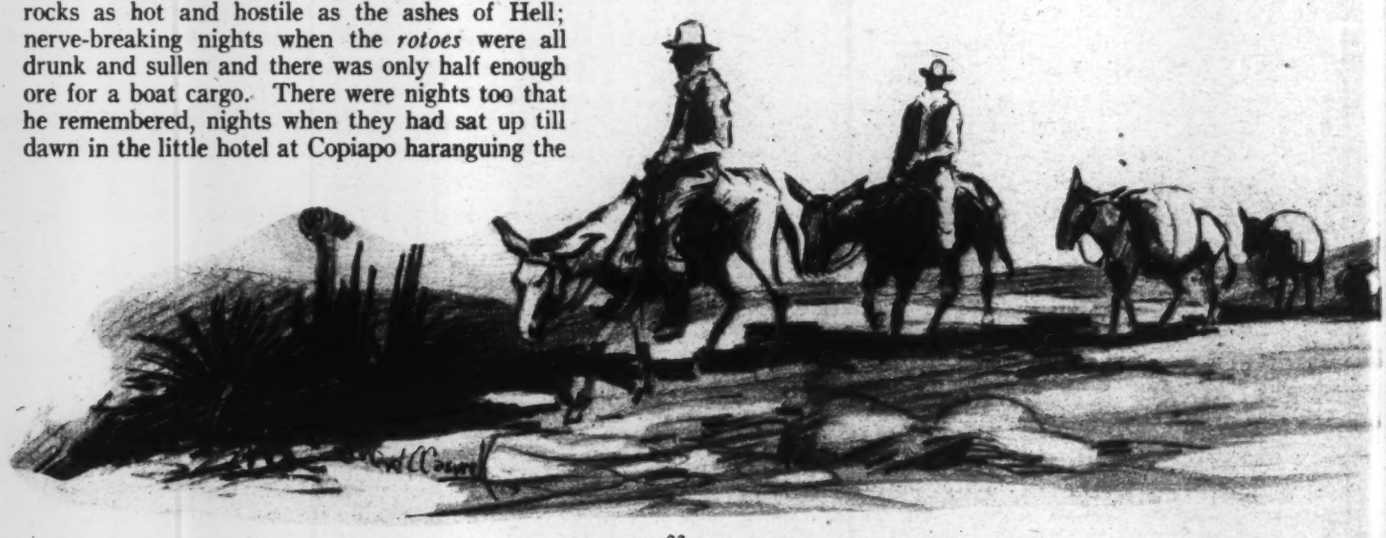
Brant shuddered the drink down, fought to control the shaking of his hands, realized with half-shamed misery that he was sobbing in a harsh barking way.

"He was my oldest friend," he said when he could speak. "Almost my only friend, you might say. I've lived in lonely places most of my life—Chile—the Atacama country."

"Fine old chap," said Lyon. "Never occurred to him that he was coasting down hill—never took any care of himself."

Brant knew how North had laughed at counsel, at men who expected him to seek the smoother ascents. Pictures came back to him: blazing days in that verdureless country along the Chilean coast, a land buried in the choking dust of caliche; long journeyings astride a jolting mule through rocks as hot and hostile as the ashes of Hell; nerve-breaking nights when the *rotoes* were all drunk and sullen and there was only half enough ore for a boat cargo. There were nights too that he remembered, nights when they had sat up till dawn in the little hotel at Copiapo haranguing the

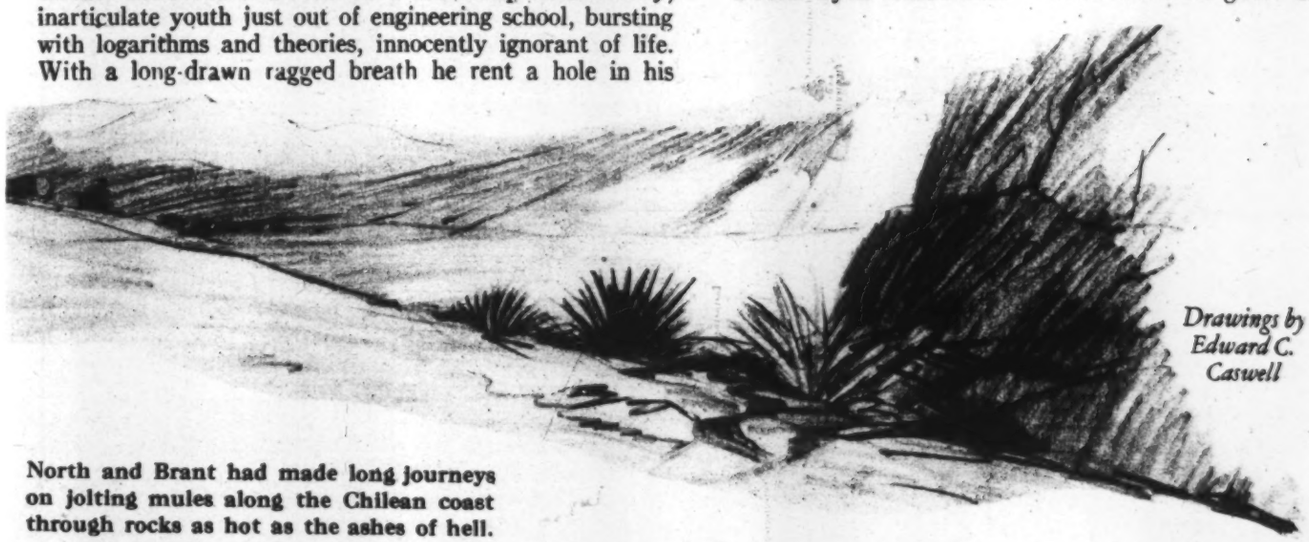
"GREETINGS and what-the devil!" He flung his kit on the floor. "Reception Committee?"



Britishers who owned copper concessions in the hills, conniving, begging almost, to get steel laid in to the mines.

These memories brought a choking huskiness into Brant's throat—memories of an old man's friendship for a solitary, inarticulate youth just out of engineering school, bursting with logarithms and theories, innocently ignorant of life. With a long-drawn ragged breath he rent a hole in his heart and buried these memories deep. It was like burying an aching wound alive, but North was dead. What was past was his, now—his alone.

Doctor Lyon roused him. "What about the girl? Has



Drawings by Edward C. Caswell

North and Brant had made long journeys on jolting mules along the Chilean coast through rocks as hot as the ashes of hell.

she been told? I understand she is his niece."

Brant struggled out of his numbness, mumbled a confused assent. They were all nieces, he remembered, all the pitiful little creatures who drifted into North's life and out again into limbo. Brant recalled a half dozen of them—the little blonde German-Chilean who had cried so much at Osorno, the soft-voiced woman with the Latin eyes and the trapped, sickened look, a certain amber-eyed Gertrude with a bitter mouth that laughed too much. "Niece of mine," North always introduced them, wrinkling the pink flesh around his eyes.

BUT Janvi—Janvi whose odd name was like the tinkling of a gipsy tamborine, whose eyes were full of Indian summer haze and the soft shine of hearth fires—Brant could not fit her into the pattern of North's jaded last years. He ached with dull misery and with an inhibiting dread. If Northrup had not died what would have been the answer to that question with which he had dared to rend the inviolate shrouding of his friend's personal affairs?

What was she—this girl who, Brant had known for an ecstatic week, had been created in the image of the one woman—for him?

More men came in, and Brant realized dully that he was being maneuvered away while Northrup was carried upstairs, a sagging unwieldy burden which once had been a man. The rain wept and there was an eerie wail in the chimney.

"Dismal night to die," said Lyon.

Brant hardly heard. An arc of light had swung through the blackness outside. A car door slammed. She had come.

She stood in the door, white-faced, wide-eyed, her cloak slipping down leaving one golden shoulder bare, a childish dread stiffening her colorless lips.

"Brant," she half whispered huskily, "is it true? Is it true, Brant?"

Brant felt a ray of agony burn through him. She was so dear, so dear! Her soft hair lay tumbled on her forehead, the rain beaded a great red fan she held, her little slippers were wet.

"An hour ago," he said gently, standing to face her. "It happened suddenly, Janvi. We were talking and then—like that—he was gone!"

She nodded, her mouth piteous, tears brimming in her eyes. "He said it would be like that," she murmured. "He always said it would be like that!"

Brant held himself to a stony calm.

"Sit down, Janvi—it's a blow. He—was my friend too. Sit here—by the fire."

She looked at the chair, seemed not to see it, stood twisting the fan in her hands. A stunned grief lay in her eyes and with it something else—fear, a ghastly, incredulous consternation.

"You loved him, Janvi?"

Women had always loved Northrup, whimsical, gentle, gruff old North. Brant could understand. He had loved the old man too; gravely as he might have loved the father he had never known, indulgently as he would have loved the mother he had lost, loyally as men love one friend.

"He was all I had to love," Janvi replied in a dazed monotone, "all I've ever had. Brant," her voice rose sharply, "he promised—he promised—what shall I do?"

Brant had loved her for a week with all the repressed fire in him, and love is hard to slay between a man's hands. He heard his own voice pattering, mechanical, trite.

"There will be provisions made, very likely, Janvi. North would see to that. You'll be taken care of."

She frowned, flinging out her hands in a desperate gesture. "Did you think I meant money?" she demanded. "Did you think I was talking about money—now?"

"You're a girl, Janvi," defended Brant, confused, "rather helpless. He—took care of you?"

She seemed not to hear. She was staring into the fire, pushing back her heavy damp hair. Outside the rain sobbed against the window and the curtains waved a little in the cold draft. Then she raised her head.

"Did he talk—at the last, Brant? Did he talk about me?"

"No, Janvi," Brant walked to the window and stood looking out into the impenetrable dark, "no—he didn't talk about you."

"He didn't tell you—anything?"

Brant looked at her sorrowfully. Was she afraid of revelation? "No, he told me nothing."

"But you asked him, Brant?" He had observed before the rapier—like gift of divination she had. "You asked him?"

"Yes, I asked him."

"And he—told you nothing?"

"He died, Janvi."

A brand fell, sending up a little spray of sparks before the firelight died. A wind tugged at a shutter, rapped with cold fingers, keening its homeless cry.

"You asked him—about me?"

"I asked him who you were, Janvi." Her look puzzled Brant Gilvey. There was no shrewdness in it, no relief, only the frightened bewilderment of a betrayed child. Her face was taut and tragic.

"But—who am I, Brant?" she cried sharply. "Who am I?"

He shrugged a little, wearily. "No one knows that now, Janvi. No one but yourself."

"But you don't understand," there was a note of panic in her voice, "you don't understand, Brant. I don't know—I don't know! Who am I, Brant? *Who am I?*"

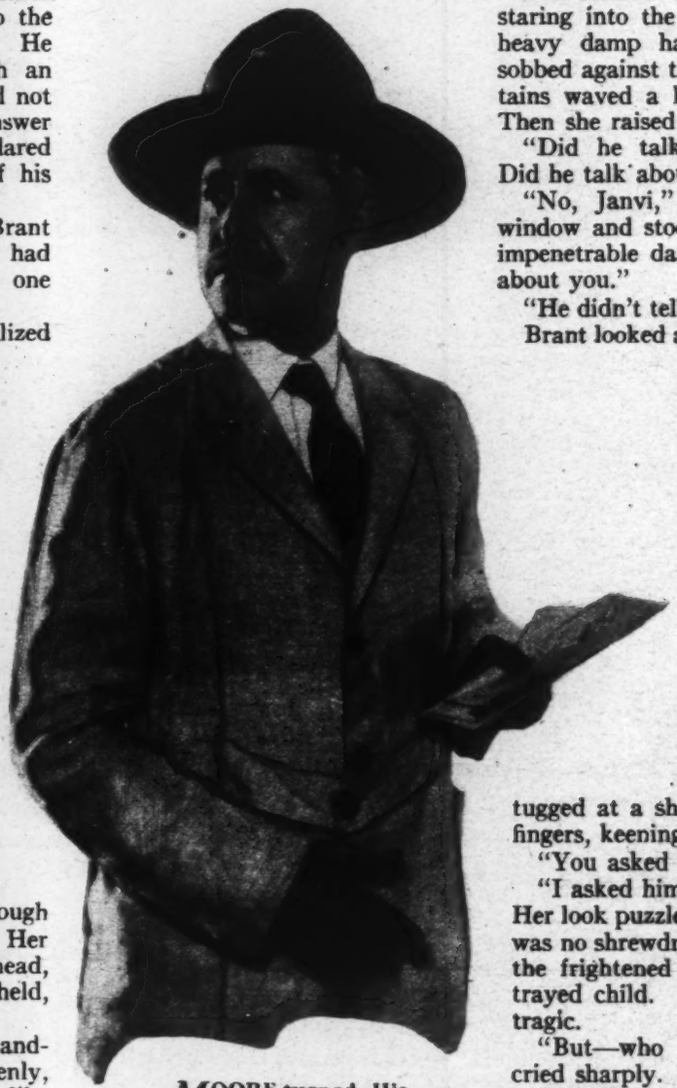
Brant's pent breath hurt his chest.

"My God, Janvi, don't you *know* who you are?"

Her mouth writhed. She bent the fan till an ivory stick snapped.

"I don't know! I don't know! He promised—he promised—but always he put me off. Who am I, Brant? Who am I?"

Vibrant, marble-white, she quivered, great tears welling in her dark eyes. Then sobs shook her, beating her down. Brant suffered, aching to hold her in his arms, patting her hair clumsily, mumbling incoherent things that hurt with



MOORE turned. His look was blue white with menace.

their inaninity. He stood helpless, suffering with her.

"There, Janvi, there—there, Janvi."

She huddled on a chair, leaning her head against the hard back, twisting her fingers round and round.

"Tell me what you do know, Janvi," Brant suggested presently.

She roused heavily, pushed back her hair with flat palms, stumbled up, walked to the fire.

"I've been here a year," she said dully. "North brought me—from the convent."

"What convent was that?"

"St. Veronica's in Ohio."

"But before that—before the convent, where did you live?"

"I don't know. I've been in the convent since I was four. He took me there when I was four."

"North took you there?"

She nodded.

"And he told you nothing?"

"He carried me in his arms—I had a red coat, I remember—and he bought me a rubber doll that squeaked. We laughed over that. And he told me that my mother was an angel—that I must never forget that. And that my father was a devil."

"Sounds like old North. But can't you remember, Janvi? Can't you remember anything?"

"O Brant," her voice broke, "if you knew how I've ached at night trying to remember!"

AGAINST the tilt of the moon was a girl on horseback—alone.

Janvi! She was there—drawn back defensively, her hand on her crop.

"And nothing comes back?"

"Drums!"

"Drums?"

"Drums across white sand. Drums in a white, white sunlight. A queer blur of a face—my mother, I've always believed. Somehow I knew she hated the drums. And some one else—plainer—a stormy scowling person who hated me. But the drums are plainest — monotonous and everlasting—in a white glare."

"But your name, Janvi? You must know your name?"

She made a little tragic gesture.

"Not even my name! The sisters at the convent did not know it. They asked him and he said, 'Oh, call her anything! What difference does it make?' So they found a little card in my trunk with *Janvi* on it. Do you know what I believe, Brant? I believe it was the record of my birthday, January sixth. But the sisters called me that — and that's all I know. Isn't it pitiful, Brant? And isn't it ridiculous? Here I am twenty — grown up!"

"There must be a record of some sort,

[*Continued on page 104*]

The GAS

The Auto Service Station Supplies a New Humorous Character as Witty as the "Japanese Schoolboy"

HEN DALL scratched a match on the sign NO SMOKING and awaited trouble.

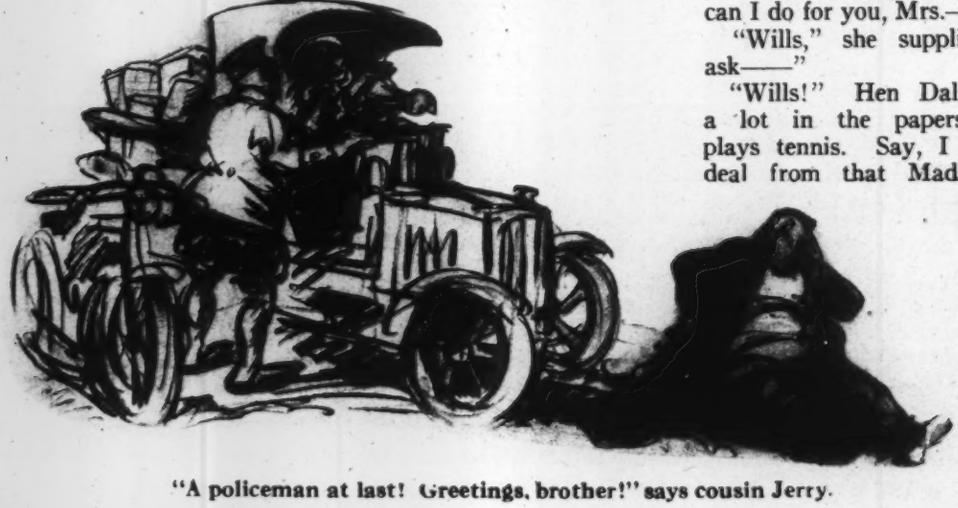
HEN DALL stood in the crooked doorway of his crooked service station, which was up a crooked alley full of chuck-holes, small boys, and many other things which the neighbors didn't need.

GAS, OIL and GREASE

—hand-lettered overhead—seemed to advertise the three commodities which Hen displayed in his hair, across his prominent nose, and down the full length of his nut-brown overalls.

He scratched a match on the sign NO SMOKING, lighted a cigaret, and awaited trouble. He should have been nervous, for only yesterday he had covered the two worst chuck-holes with bits of sheet-iron torn from his roof. Then a sweet little woman in a sweet little car had come down the lane, blown out a new tire on Hen's temporary surfacing, threatened suit, and departed hysterically. Knowing women, Hen realized that she would come back.

Toot-toot! Even as he thought of her there she came. Her little sedan wore the angry blue of her eyes.



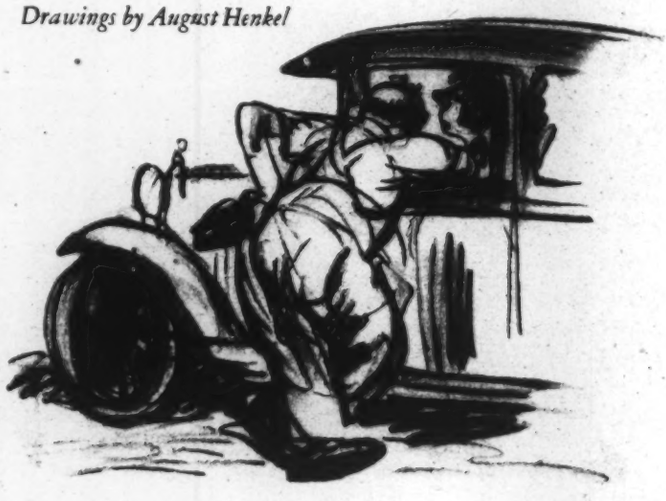
"A policeman at last! Greetings, brother!" says cousin Jerry.

"I always liked that brand o' car," said Hen Dall, coming around the red pump and leaning, like a very dirty Spanish lover, through her open window. "Luxury and use combined with mileage economy. Short wheel base, underslung, over-engined, invisible tail light, everything. Sweet as a nut. That's a lady-car. You just got to love it in spite of yesself. I'm gonna buy one for the wife as soon as me and John D. Rockefeller get together on that little deal——"

"Are you Mr. Dall?" The pretty lady pressed her cherry lips together, in an attempt, perhaps, to harden them.

"See here, lady, don't say it. Don't try to argue with me. I gotta wife to home that argues with me all day long, and much as I love it I can't have it round the office. We gotta keep business and pleasure far apart, says Jack Dempsey, or we'll never reach the shining ghoul of our

Drawings by August Henkel



Leaning through her window like a very dirty Spanish lover.

ambitions. What's yours this morning?—excuse me. I tended bar before I went into the gas business, and sometimes my language gits all tied up in a knot. But what can I do for you, Mrs.——"

"Wills," she supplied tartly, "and I've come to ask——"

"Wills!" Hen Dall beamed. "Last winter I read a lot in the papers about yer sister Helen that plays tennis. Say, I always thought she got a rough deal from that Madam O'Zell Longlong of France. Would you tell yer sister sompn for me? She oughta stop playing against women, 'specially homely ones. You know a homely woman never has no mercy for a pretty one. Sister Helen ought to play aginst men only. She'd win every time, because anybody of the male sect would git so crazy looking at her he couldn't hit a balloon with a bagpipe. Yes, lady"—dreamily—

MAN

By Wallace IRWIN

EVERY time a girl comes in, seven Browning guns is leveled at her eyebrow.

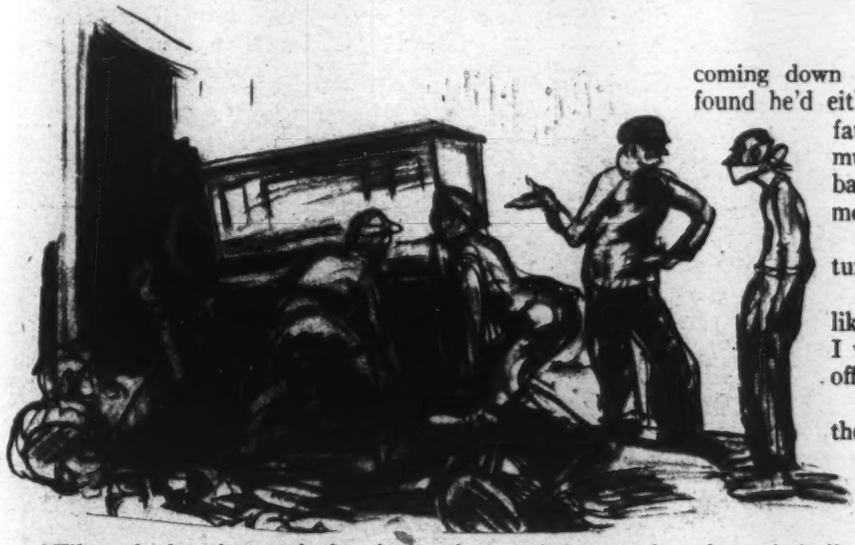
"I was always fond of Helen. I never cared much for Harry, though——"

"I came about that tire, ruined by your bad road," she edged in. "My husband thinks——"

"Girlie take it from me. Don't go too much on what yer husband thinks. Just ast my wife. Her name's Japonica, but I call her Jap. Well, Jap's the wisest woman in the world. She admits it. She never took my advice in all her born days—'cept once. That was the time I advised her to marry me. And she says it's the bummest tip ever a white woman got."

The cherry lips were beginning to move so Hen Dall hastened on with his argument.

"I see you got a new tire on the left rear where that old one blew. You got it at McCall's Garage up the Main Road, dincha? Well, you got stung. If you'd come to me right after yer shoe was cut on my sheet-iron I wouldn't of charged you a cent for the sheet-iron—and it was practically ruined. I could have told you not to go to Bert McCall. He's profiteering on rubber. Axilly profiteering! He makes the public pay the overhead on that lace-edged garage of his. I could have sold you that tire for thirty-eight cents less, and never charged a cent for air——"



"When the burglars took the pianna they untied me and made me help."

"I think it's a crime——"

"Ain't that the truth?" agreed Hen Dall. "But whaddaya gonna do these days? The cops don't pay no attention to criminals any more. And I'll tell you why, Mrs. Wills. They're too busy bawling out innocent ottomobeelists for knocking down lamp-posts and running up the wrong side of the street.

"Lookit my cousin Jerry Hinch. He's a house-painter and decorator, and you gotta have a fast car in that business or the paint'll begin running on you. Well Jerry was coming down the Bullivard when, about K Street, he found he'd either have to stop or hit a fat fella. The fat fella wasn't scarcely hurt atall; but he must a been nervous the way he started a ballyhoo. Firecrackers! Long comes a motor-cycle bull——

"'Whadda think yare? A wheelbarrer, turning a corner on one wheel?'

"'Nossir!' says cousin Jerry, 'and I don't like yer tone. I got witnesses to prove that I was on two wheels—only the left ones was off the ground.'

"'Well,' says the cop, 'y're in the hands of the police.'

"'Good!' hollers Jerry. 'Burglars got into my flat last night. They took the carpet, the dining-room set, the chandelier, and the dog. When they got around to the pianna they untied me and made me help move it, 'cause it was too heavy for 'em. Came the dawn. The only cop I could find was out back of Slamm's Grocery, helping a bootlegger with a load o' canned peaches——So here's a policeman at last! Greetings, brother!' says cousin Jerry.

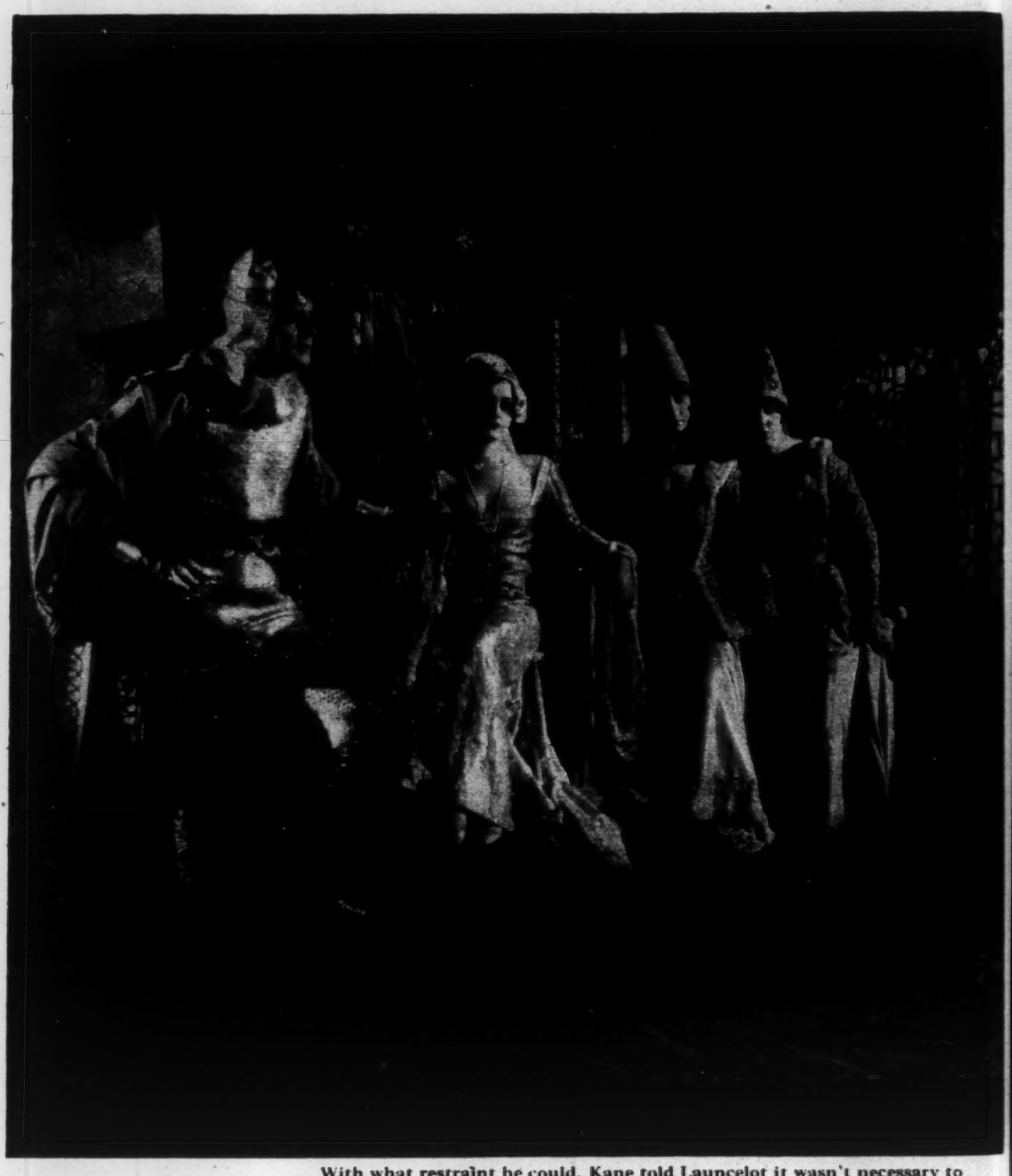
"Ain't it pitiful! Contempt of the law is what done it. says Elihu Root, and he said [*Continued on page 94*]

Hen Dall never charged a cent for air.

By JOHN DWIGHT ELLIS

He Thought He Knew Women —until He Met a Royal One

The



With what restraint he could, Kane told Launcelot it wasn't necessary to

SOPHISTICATION, like every dogma, must have its day. We scoff at miracles, at golden hair, at dynasties, at rosy cheeks. We know, of course, just how they got that way. Love has been reduced to a chemical formula; age is a mere question of glands. And if, perchance, anything should happen to the solar system, we could organize a staff of expert engineers and run the universe by the most up-to-date and scientific methods.

So held Edward S. Kane, at any rate. And Edward Kane knew a good bit. He hadn't spent twelve years around Broadway's white light district to no avail. Even if he'd gotten nowhere as an actor, he'd picked up much useful information as a man. A little wise lounging, a little judicious indiscretion—and women! Ah, there was his specialty!

Back in those painful, early years when the first sharp

PRINCESS and the BUNK

paw Queen Guinevere in the farewell scene.

impact of life was crumbling the stuff of dreams, during those interminable waits in the outer offices of theatrical agencies, the lessons had commenced. Girls, girls, girls—blondes, chemical and otherwise, Titians, tinted and otherwise, brunettes, wise and otherwise—all sizes, assorted varieties—the slender tall, the medium plump, the stylish stout.

At first he had observed them with a certain shyness—mysterious goddesses to be worshiped from afar. But the shyness had somehow vanished very swiftly.

Yes, he knew women. Everybody on Broadway admitted that. Pasts and futures he scented as by instinct; complexions he could tell at a glance; breeding, five minutes; intelligence, perhaps ten; and in less than a quarter of an hour he invariably knew with a fine precision exactly how high the standards.

In consequence of his remarkable discernment he was irresistibly in love with all the world and quite immune to Love.

"All alike," he'd genially confide through the purple haze of smoke at his club. "'The colonel's lady and Judy O'Grady.' As for love——" he'd fleck his cigaret ash with humorous contempt, and by way of shifting the subject would perhaps flip out a new handkerchief that boasted the coloring of a dislocated sunset. "Say, isn't this a corker?"

But at the time of this story Edward S. Kane was far too preoccupied to philosophize in club-rooms. Remember the superfeature photoplay, "The Female of the Species"? The Fine Art Fotoplay Corporation released it about two years ago. That picture was the making of Kane. His theatrical experiments, his feminine experience and a little, good, old-fashioned drag had got him the job of director. And the money that he made for the Fine Art is one of the bedtime stories along Broadway.

At the studio he had become a sort of dictator. His favor was courted unblushingly by every girl on the premises. Beatrice Blair, chief star in the firmament of the Fine Art, besieged him with invitations to tea. His secretary shyly told him that his profile was like John Barrymore's. And there wasn't a stenographer in the place who didn't take on a delicate hue if he happened to smile "Good morning."

But all this adoration, so liberally ladled out on all sides, left him—well, no, not exactly cold—that's expecting too much of human nature—but certainly tepid. These women! Lordy, he knew them too well. Now, with his work it was different. There was the everlasting gamble of ideas, the exhilaration of a job to be well done, and the intoxication of acknowledged success.

That is why he pulled his chair two inches closer to the casting director, on a certain spring morning, turning his back squarely on that violet-eyed typist who smiled so sweetly and, oh, so inanely, and said in a low, tense tone, "Man alive! It's a great idea. The publicity alone is worth half a million. Do you really think we can get her?"

Al Roche, in charge of casting at the Fine Art, nodded his head.

"Remember the little blonde you used in your last picture? The one you called 'Puddin'? Well, it was she who put me wise in the first place. And a few days ago

she asked me what I could do to help the girl out."

"I see. Then this girl has never been here for work herself?"

Al Roche laughed. "Not her. Seems she's starving in regal pride in some hole of a garret down around Washington Square. Chin up, spirits down."

Kane was silent, his eyes on two photographs he was holding.

One was a cut from a newspaper more than a few years old. "Grand Duchess Maria Nicholaevna, third daughter of the house of Romanof," stated the caption. The Princess, serenely unmindful of Kane's scrutiny, gazed straight before her, her superb young head erect, her lips smiling. Beneath the fur toque which she wore like a coronet was the whisper of rich coils of hair and of deep-shadowed eyes.

"Baby, you're all right," said Kane respectfully to her Royal Highness, as he laid the other portrait alongside.

The second was an enlargement of an ordinary snap-shot of the head of a girl. Kane studied the photograph intently for a few moments. Maria Nicholaevna, third daughter of the house of Romanof! The features were the same—delicate and fine—the poise of the head the same. Only the expression of the eyes was different—more mature and sad.

"Wow!" Roche exploded. "The racket this will make. Not a newspaper has had a crack at the stuff. We'll keep this absolutely mum. Then, just before our release, giant two-inch type—*RUSSIAN PRINCESS SIGNS FILM CONTRACT*—"

Kane interrupted him. "You're dead sure of this, Roche?"

"Sure?—Sure as shooting! In chasing it up I even went to the son of the Czar's physician. He's living over in Jersey. I got hold of his name—well, I won't bother you with the details. Anyway, I made up some song and dance so he wouldn't know what I was after, and shoved the snap-shot in front of him. Tears came into his eyes! He said something I didn't get. When I asked him to repeat it, he murmured, 'Poor little Maria Nick—' whatever it is. This boy was brought up at court—knew her well. Oh, there's no doubt about it."

"GRAND DUCHESS Maria Nicholaevna, third daughter of the house of Romanof!"

"WELL, what's the explanation? What's her story?"

"It listens like a fairy-tale. The royal family was held at Ekaterinburg, closely guarded. Their friends couldn't do anything. But it seems a Red guard fell for this Princess. And—well, in the confusion on the last day, just before the bodies were thrown down a mine shaft, he smuggled her off, somehow. She had been badly wounded and looked dead, but he saw the glimmer of life in her."

The tragedy, lightly touched on, affected the two men more than they were willing to admit. Roche continued, after a pause, "There's always been a rumor that the Princess lives. No smoke without fire, you know."

Kane held the two pictures side by side to the light. "Yes, they're identical," he said. "The same lines of cheek and chin, the same curve to the mouth!" He checked his enthusiasm. "How did Puddin' find her out?"

"By accident. Seems she was living in the same rooming-house just across the hall. Puddin' noticed the girl from the first. Couldn't help but notice her—awfully stunning and shabby and ritzie. But noticing was about as far as Puddin' got. There was some bristling, black-bearded, old codger always on the scene—sort of 1860 model of a perfect gentleman, a little rusty and stiff in the hinges, doing the ancient retainer act in perfect style.

"They kept pretty much to themselves. No callers, no mail. Then one night comes a telegram—woke the whole house up. The very next day, presto! off goes the old boy.

"It was then that Puddin' had her innings. Our Princess Maria Nick—whatever her name is—took to wandering about alone. Pretty tough, I'll say. One day Puddin' passed her in the Square, and her Highness smiled. A while later they met on the stairs and she said, 'Good-mornin',' in English. Puddin' says she was so surprised that she forgot to answer. From that time on the thaw set in."

An insistent knock on the door cut into the story. Kane's secretary thrust in her highly glossed head.

"Oh, Mr. Kane, Miss Blair is waiting to see you about the part of Queen Guinevere in 'Woman's Virtue.'"

"I'm sorry. Tell Miss Blair I'm very ousy just now." Kane's tone was good-natured, but the lazy drawl held the unmistakable suggestion that he wasn't to be disturbed.

The girl hesitated, colored faintly, then went on: "And Mr. Kane—" she lingered a fraction of a moment longer than necessary on the name—"the costuming department called down to know how many suits of armor you were going to need for the big tournament scene."

Kane wheeled about, proof against the smile that met him.

"Won't you see one of my assistants about such trifles? I'm busy just now."

"Yes, sir." The door closed. Kane turned back to Roche.

"As you were saying?"

"Well, her Royal Nibs wasn't exactly clubby. All she told Puddin' was that her name was Maria Bazaroff—or something like that. Not a word about Russia and the blood and tragedy she'd been wading through. Puddin' would never have known a thing if the girl hadn't gone under with the grippe some three months ago.

"She was pretty badly hit, and not a soul in the city to turn to. Puddin' was working here at that time, but she used to drop in evenings to do odds and ends for the little Romanof.

Drawing by Johan Bull

Suddenly he was springing up the steps.

"Then one night as she came up the stairs she heard trouble on the top landing before she ever got there. Say, it sounded like regular movie stuff to hear Puddin' tell it. There was the old landlady raging about back rent. And there was her Highness sitting bolt up in bed, eyes flashing like one of these Wagnerian storm goddesses. No tirade. No outburst. Not her. She raises her hand—the grand gesture, you know—tells the landlady to leave her room at once—and zowie! if the old hussy doesn't turn about and go!

"When the door had closed——"

Kane smiled the omniscient smile of the sophisticated.

"When the door had closed," Kane repeated, "our Princess crumbles into a moist-eyed, broken-hearted girl, turns to Puddin', swears her to secrecy and asks her to run to the nearest hock shop and pawn the crown 'jools.'"

Roche stared. "Exactly," he said. "Or almost exactly. Did Puddin' tell you?"

Kane's omniscient smile grew boyish. "Oh, no," he said. "I've been sticking to scenarios. But go on."

"Well, there weren't any 'jools,' to be quite accurate. Only a hand-painted miniature set in pearls. Puddin' says she had the devil of a time trying to raise anything like its value among the pawnbrokers of lower New York. Now the money's gone. A week ago Puddin' suggested the movies but her Royal Highness wouldn't hear of it.

"A few days ago Puddin' came to me. She'd just discovered that Miss Romanof had been living on Uneeda Biscuits for the past week. There's a hard logic about a whole week of Uneeda Biscuits. Puddin' thinks she might be induced—get that in this day of the movie mad—induced—to take a job on condition that absolutely nothing is said about her real identity for the present."

Kane's eyes had strayed back to the photograph. "Good picture type," he said. "But I can't say anything definite until I've had a look at the girl. I'll see your Princess tomorrow at three."

By three o'clock of the following day the appointment had faded from Kane's memory. There was Miss Blair—pretty, incorrigible Miss Blair—to be settled. She had just finished reading the scenario for "Woman's Virtue." She disliked the story in general and her part as Queen Guinevere in particular. Wasn't there some way—she thought Mr. Kane could arrange it, of course—for King Arthur to let Guinevere have a divorce so she could marry Launcelot? Launcelot seemed to her so much more a hundred percent he-man—so much more—oh, well, Mr. Kane must understand. And she didn't like going into a convent at the end. It wasn't her type stuff. Furthermore, she wasn't at all sure she would look well in a nun's veil. It was too severe.

Against her entreaties a weaker spirit might have yielded or snapped—not so Kane's. In spite of the barrage of smiles and soft mascaroed glances, Kane stood up steadfastly for the convent and the big renunciation scene. It would be something different. Grudgingly Miss Blair [*Continued on page 119*]

"RUMORS about me? Do tell me!" She smiled maddeningly and moved a bit closer. It was rash in a princess.

"Your young lawyer friend was with a couple of starved-looking debutantes."

What Price Beauty

Does It Profit a Woman to Gain Young Love if She Lose Her Own Happiness?

By Helen Schermerhorn Young

EVELYN McALLISTER was a truly beautiful woman. When she came out she was spoken of as "the beautiful Evelyn Sheldon"; when she married, "the beautiful Mrs. McAllister"; and now "the beautiful widow of Bruce McAllister."

As she lay on the sofa in her sitting-room this winter afternoon in a mauve silk dress—she had but lately taken off mourning—she seemed little more mature than on the day she had married.

Her head was young—one of those bronze curly heads that look youthful even when gray streaks appear; her feet and ankles were those of a girl. But only Evelyn knew how heart-breaking was her struggle to preserve the enviable symmetry of form between her pretty head and her slim ankles. She had, indeed, "kept her lines."

In keeping her lines, however, she kept herself hungry most of the time. She was hungry, now as she lay there—and she was nervous. But her nervousness was not due entirely to dieting.

She had lighted a cigaret, and was looking at the clock as Polly Porter entered unannounced. They were girlhood friends, and their kiss was the informal gesture of years of similar greetings.

Polly threw herself on the other end of the sofa, leaned over, and with a pained expression removed her right slipper.

"My feet are killing me. Think I must be getting a little gout in this right toe. Champagne, I guess. I don't see why anything as nice as champagne should remind you of it the next day in your toe."

Polly was forty, looked her age, and didn't care who knew it.

"Tell me what you've been doing," said Evelyn.

"Let's see," Polly started, becoming suddenly animated.

"Last night I was out dancing. Jim had some old meeting, so Mary Douglass and I dug up two boy friends. We dined at the Ritz and went to Montmartre."

"Whom did you see there? Any pretty dresses?"

"Janet Clothier and the Jamesons."

"Did Janet look pretty—does she look young?"

A hint of impatience flashed across Polly's face but only momentarily.

"Very pretty—but she had on a dress that her daughter might have worn. You know she's as old as we are, Eve."

"Yes," said Evelyn quietly. "We all came out the same year. Whom else did you see?"

"That young lawyer friend of yours—what's his name?"

"Kenneth Howell."

"Good-looking devil," murmured Polly reaching for a cigarette.

"Whom was he with, Polly?" Evelyn asked.

"A couple of starved-looking debutantes."

For a few moments the two women smoked in silence. Then Polly gave a great sigh, and said:

"Eve, I could use a drink. This is a hard time in the afternoon. The Titanic didn't sink any faster than I'm sinking this very minute."

Evelyn rang for the butler and ordered Scotch and soda.

"I do wish I could be as temperate as you, Eve," Polly went on. "No wonder you have a figure like a flapper. You don't eat enough to keep a bird alive. Now, look at me. I used to be a perfect thirty-six—always remembered our pew-number by it. But now that I am a forty, I always get into the Van Dusen's pew."

The butler put the tray with the Scotch and soda on a low table between the two friends and poured a drink for Polly.

"Where are you going for tea?" asked Evelyn.

"My second home—the Ritz."

"Oh, I was hoping you could stay for tea. Mr. Howell is coming up with some stock for me to sign."

"I thought you always went down-town to the lawyer's

Miss Foot was keeping her young for Ken.

office, Eve. What's the idea of this young fellow coming up here?"

"Simpler and saves me the trip. You know, I feel lost below Washington Square."

"You've had him to dine, too, haven't you?" Polly laughed—not quite mirthfully. "The old family lawyer stuff, I suppose."

"The young family lawyer," replied Evelyn. "A nice change."

"Seems to me you're seeing a lot of that young man, Eve."

"Oh, not too much. You needn't worry about it, dear."

"But I do, Evelyn." Polly was serious. "Twenty years ago I walked up the aisle with you with a man twenty years older than yourself—and now for heaven's sake don't ask me to do it again with one almost twenty years younger! If you keep in your own generation, you don't have to worry. But if you're going into the next, then you are up against it. Too much competition. I couldn't be bothered. Better take them a little older. They're less worry."

"But not so attractive, Polly."

"My dear, that's all a matter of taste. Now suppose you fell for this young thing of a lawyer. Wouldn't you have a sweet time! Why, he's just about the age of your own step-daughter. By the way, how long will Carol be gone?"

"It's rather indefinite. She's studying in Italy, you know. She's very attractive, Polly. At times it was difficult bringing her up. But she is a great satisfaction to me now."

"Wouldn't be if she were home and you were going in for young men, Evelyn. She'd cramp your style."

"Not at all. She'd make me feel young."

"There you are again, Evelyn. You're certainly hipped on this age business. You'll use up more energy trying to keep young than if you didn't bother about it. You might think it was a ghost that is pursuing you."

Evelyn gave a start and walked toward

Carol's golf was excellent, and it was always a relief when she motored off with Ken to the country club on Saturdays and Sundays.

the mirror. When she turned from it and faced Polly again there were little evidences of fright in her eyes. She hestitated and rested her hand on the arm of the sofa almost as if she needed support. "That's just what it is, Polly. It's a ghost."

"What difference does it make, Eve? None of us can beat the almanac. The first thing you know we'll both be going to the dentist and saying we are having some bridge-work done, when in reality we will be getting a full set of uppers and lowers—and putting them in a glass at night."

"You're simply awful, Polly. Don't remind me that we're coming on. I hate age and fear it above everything on earth. I somehow wish you hadn't called it a ghost."

"Why not, Eve? Why not call it bluntly what it is—why be miserable hanging on to youth? Now suppose in a foolish moment you were to marry a young man. He'd have you doing all sorts of absurd youthful things—riding in an open roadster, going to football games, and freezing yourself to death—And remember your neuralgia."

Evelyn shrugged her shoulders and said defiantly:

"I do everything I did when I was a girl."

"I notice you stop at the ninth hole, Eve. Why, the kids of today play eighteen and twenty-seven. As for myself, my feet hurt at four. Why punish yourself?"

"To keep young!" Evelyn's voice had suddenly taken on a sudden passion. "To defy old age. To be with young people. To feel like them."

"Are you crazy, Evelyn?" It was as near a quarrel as the two had approached in their lifelong friendship. "If you were to try to keep up with a man younger than yourself—to compete with women his age—why, you'd be licked at the start. Evelyn, you'd be in *hell*."

Polly started pacing back and forth but suddenly stopped directly before Evelyn.

"Surely, you're not thinking of getting married, Evelyn?"

Evelyn looked up into Polly's face. Her gray eyes were misty. She took Polly's hand and held it against her face.

"I'm lonely," was all she said.

"Evelyn. Look at me—please." She paused. "You're not interested in Kenneth Howell?"

"I love him"

Polly closed her eyes and little lines creased her forehead. She put her arms around Evelyn and, like a mother comforting a child, whispered: "Forgive me, Eve. I never dreamed it."

"I——" Evelyn started to say something when the butler entered and announced Mr. Howell.

Both women quickly powdered their noses, and when Kenneth Howell entered they greeted him as casually as if he had interrupted a discussion of current fashions.

Kenneth Howell was one of the most popular young men of his set. The girls left no doubt of that. The dowagers confirmed the opinion of their daughters.

And he had brains. Some day he would be inevitably an outstanding lawyer. Already he was in a good firm—one of the old-school type—and had distinguished himself somewhat on his few appearances in the higher courts.

He had the build of a football hero—had been in fact All-American guard at Yale—and had won a decoration during the war. His head was modeled with the pure lines of a Grecian statue, and Evelyn had often imagined how his curly hair would feel under the caress of her hand.

And what life he brought into a room! He filled it with health and youth and good nature and enthusiasm.

When Polly saw Ken lean over her friend, noticed the reverence with which he spoke to her and how his young face flushed, she gave up. Any woman would fall for that—especially a lonely woman.

As Ken took Polly's hand, extended in introduction, he didn't know it, but she was with him and for him. She had changed step

WHEN she turned from the mirror there were little evidences of fright in her eyes.

completely. If Evelyn loved him, she, too, would love him. Presently the three sat down to tea, and Polly was startled as she noticed how much younger Eve seemed since Ken's arrival. It was as if some miracle were happening under her eyes. She could feel the attraction between them. The boy's eyes fairly melted when he looked at Evelyn, and Evelyn's went almost black with warmth. She spilled the tea when she poured it, like a nervous girl with her first beau.

Polly stayed only long enough to make a hasty appraisal of Kenneth. She knew they wanted to be alone.

"Time for me to go, Eve. I mustn't arrive later than an hour after my next tea date."

When the tea-things had been taken out, Evelyn went to her accustomed place at the far end of the sofa, and for a moment there was an embarrassing silence between the two.

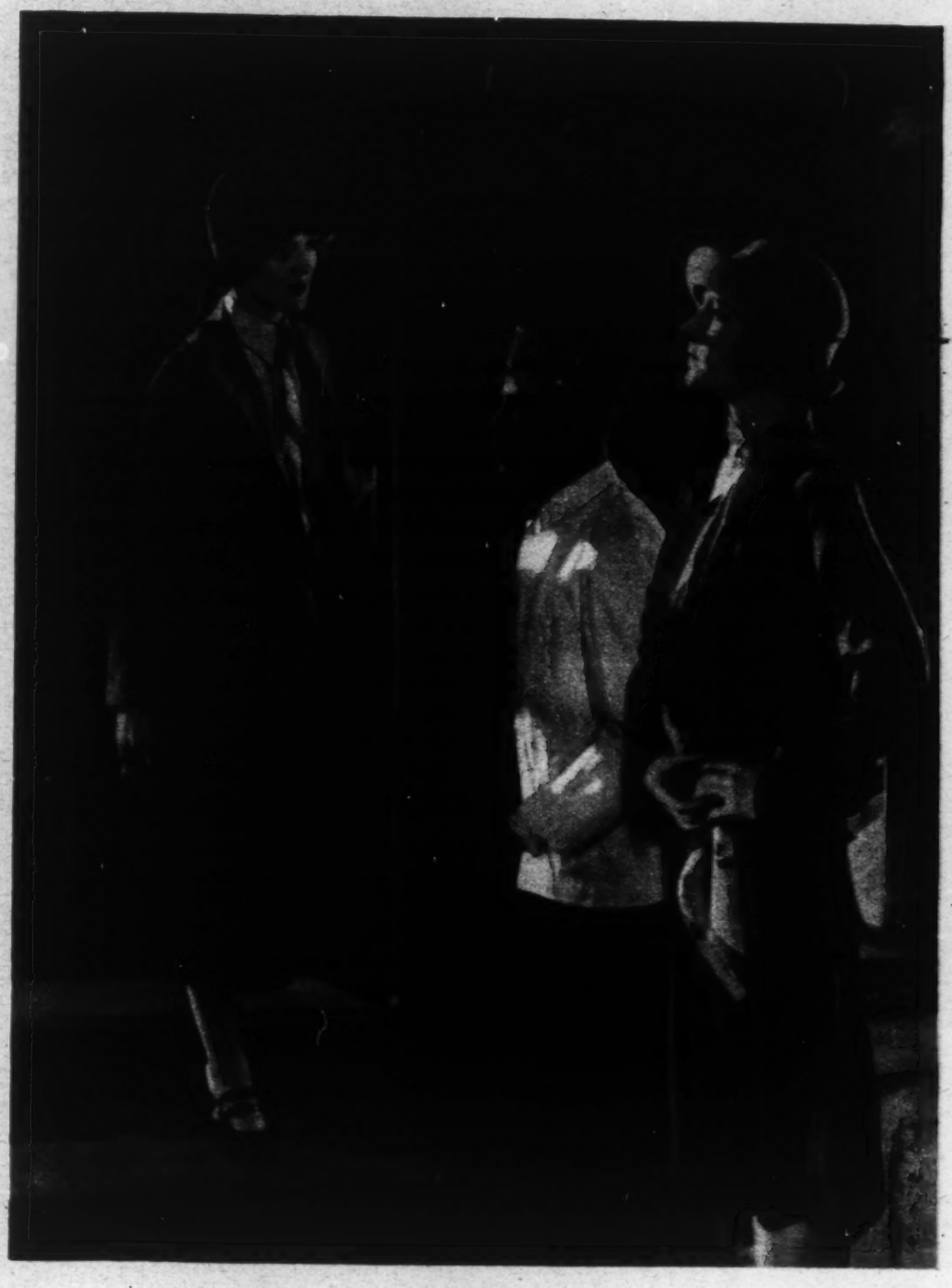
"Did you bring the stock?" asked Evelyn for want of something to say.

"Oh, yes," replied Ken. "There's nothing for you to do but put your signature right here." He handed her his fountain pen and leaned over her as she signed, somewhat falteringly, where he had indicated. His head was very near hers, and he drew back quickly. Her shoulder had been perilously close to his.

She turned and said:

"You are very kind to take the trouble to come up here like this to help me. It makes me feel—as if I had someone to take care of me."

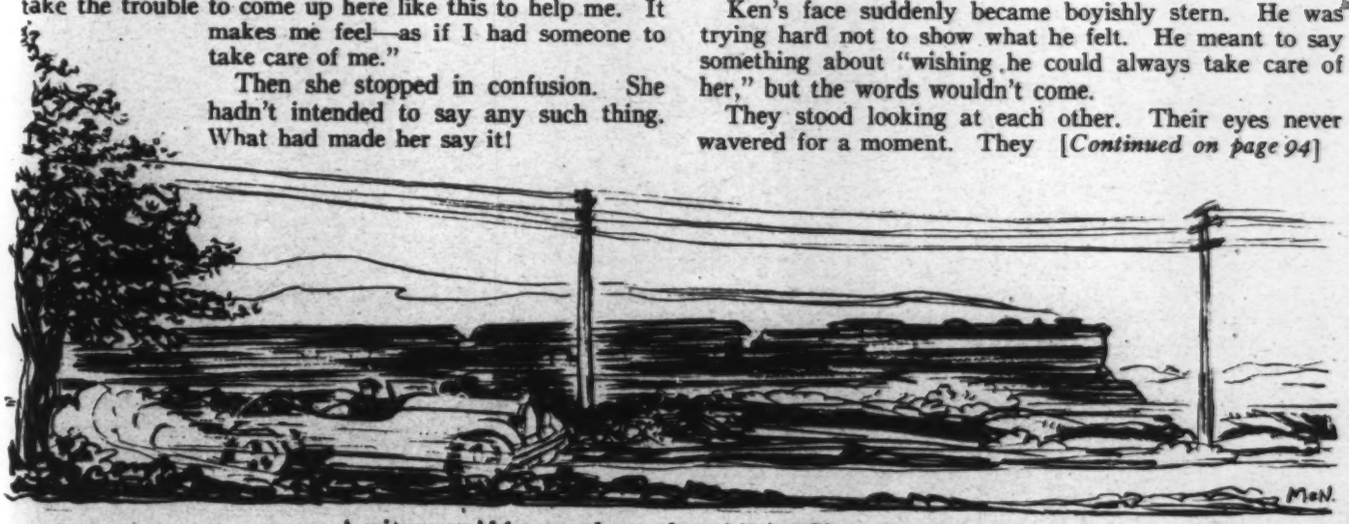
Then she stopped in confusion. She hadn't intended to say any such thing. What had made her say it!



"Don't try to get off the train, Carol!" said Polly—and her eyes blazed with command.

Ken's face suddenly became boyishly stern. He was trying hard not to show what he felt. He meant to say something about "wishing he could always take care of her," but the words wouldn't come.

They stood looking at each other. Their eyes never wavered for a moment. They [*Continued on page 94*]



A witness said he saw the roadster hitting fifty miles an hour.

Drawings by Eugene McNerney, Jr.

A Skyscraper Man

When he lost his Nerve, he lost his Girl . . . but he saved Something that brought him back

By GENEVIEVE NEERGAARD

The kitten would play while he was working.

BILL RAND lounged against a post at the entrance of the Silver Star—Any Seat In The House Fifteen Cents—and tried to look anywhere but where his eyes were drawn. With cap pulled low and jaws casually rhythmic on a hunk of spearmint, he stood slouching in the spring sunshine, telling himself to snap out of it and not act like somethin' was eatin' him.

He dug his hands deep into his corduroy pockets and puckered his lips to the blare of the mechanical piano in the arcade behind him——

I'll be loving you,
Al-ways——
With a love that's true,
Al-ways——

Aw, what was the use? She wasn't lookin' anyhow. She didn't even know he was alive. Say, you'd think he was a hole in the air the way her eyes slid past him to that fat cigar clerk from the shop next door!

Maybelle . . .

See her there in her orange-drink stand that fitted into the foyer of the Silver Star. Maybelle, her sleek, black hair the blacker for the great papier-mâché orange that was her background, her arms in their flame-colored sleeves folded on the counter, her eyes tilted cornerwise to the fillip of badinage—— "Oh, g'wan! Sa-a-ay, I bet you hand that applesauce to ev'y dame you meet! G'wa-an! Oh, is th-a-a-t so"—Like an upward-curving silver hook, that last, sharp-pointed—"Is tha-a-at so! Sa-ay, howd' yuh get that way?" Quick on her feet, Maybelle. Lotsa class. Bill liked a girl with a come-back.

The noon crowd was emptying out now. Market Street became a viscous stream, lava-like. Clerks. Men with tired, grayish faces and a flaking of dandruff on their stooped shoulders. Girls, swinging by in chattering groups; pretty, painted alike, resembling rows of gay paper dolls. Jostling, pushing. Throwing little sidelong smiles from under crescent lashes.

They might have been a scurry of dust for all the heed Bill paid them. He hooked his arm around the post and craned a little. Gee! Looka that bird makin' a play for Maybelle! His glass was empty—what'd he want to hang around for? Showin' off his snappy checks, that's what. Spats too—Bill thrust out his jaw and bunched his fists automatically—spats! Gosh! Wouldn't he like to give that guy a poke in the jaw? Wouldn't he though?

His muscles tensed, but relaxed again. What good would it do him? He couldn't poke the whole world in the jaw. And that's about what he'd have to do if he was ever goin' to get his girl back. Or ever goin' to look himself in the face again, if it come to that . . .

"Willie!" she had called him. "Willie!" She'd flung it at him last night before all the rest. "Don't go up if you're scared—Willie!" and had curled her lip at him when he said he guessed he'd just sit outside the Ferris wheel railing and wait.

"Willie——" Well, wasn't that what the gang was calling him now? Yellow, they said he was—he'd fought Art McGeoghan for pinning that on him, had stood with lowered head and taken sledge-hammer blows from Art's great red fists until the taste of blood had sickened him and he'd gone down in a shuddering heap before the circle of men; and they'd turned away, one by one, ashamed for

Drawings by Johan Bull

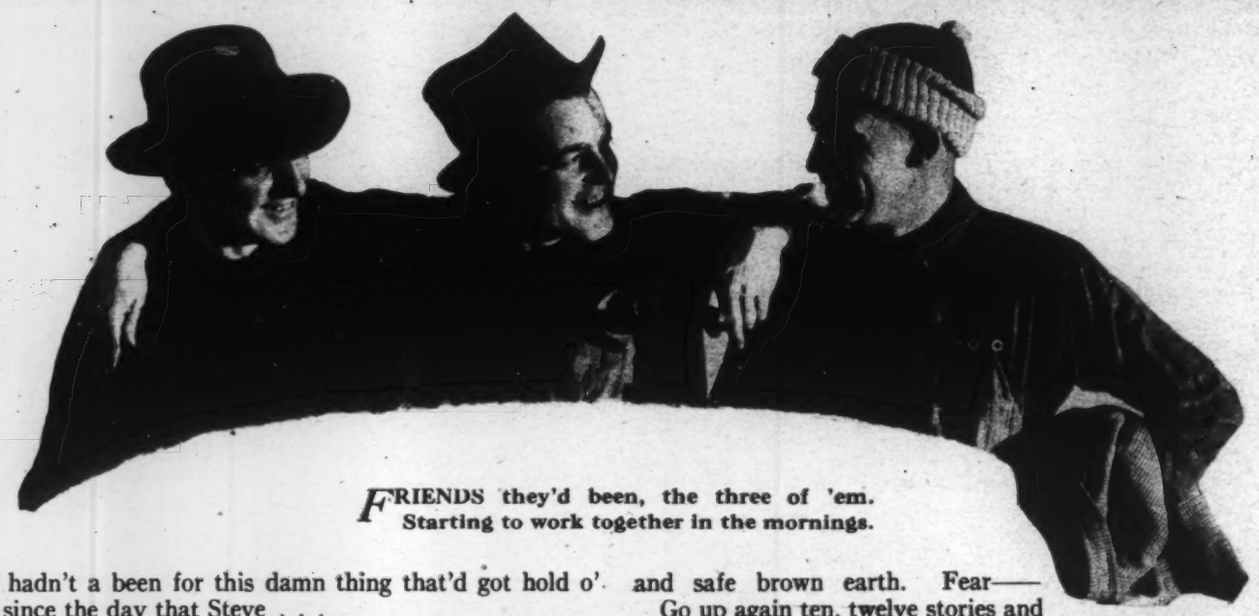
As he hugged the wall, he thought of the times he used to run—*run* along the girders.

Big, red-headed Steve Lacey. One moment laughing and lusty in the sun. The next—

him. Yellow! The boy leaning there in the doorway of the Silver Star smothered a groan.

The three of 'em—he and Jim and Steve Lacey. Runnin' up steel. Friends, they'd been, starting to work together in the mornings; joshing together above the stabbing clamor of the riveting hammer and the whine of the red-hot bolts; eating their lunches together, straddling a girder at incredible heights—never once glancing down into the canyoned streets below, never once thinking of them—going home together at night, sweat-grimed, weary, packed into a crowded vestibule while the car thundered out over the gray plain of South o' Market to the Potrero.

Friends, he and Jim and big, laughing, red-headed Steve. They'd a been brothers-in-law, by this time, he and Jim,



FRIENDS they'd been, the three of 'em. Starting to work together in the mornings.

if it hadn't a been for this damn thing that'd got hold o' him since the day that Steve . . .

Bill Rand shut his eyes, wincing from the memory. More than three months it was, now, and still the thing was as sharp as if it had happened yesterday. There was Jim, holding the dolly-bar, while Steve gripped the bull machine in his great, sinewy, leather-gloved hands. Stab-stab-stab. The flight of a bolt, the ting of it against the bucket's side. Stab-stab-stab. The song of the hammer driving the hot steel home. He could almost feel the heat on his face, his muscles jerked to the upward fling of the bolt. Over three months ago——

God! It was happening all over again *now! Now* against his closed lids.

Steve, with the sun bright on his red hair and a laugh on his lips—one moment high up in the wind-swept sky, and the next—shooting off into space. Twisting—turning —clutching—plunging. Five stories he'd hurtled like that. Then he'd struck a beam.

It had been dead weight from there to the ground. Dead weight.

One moment laughing and lusty in the sun. The next—a thing flattened against the pavement below. One moment strong and alive. The next—dead weight. God! The gap between the two!

Men had run shouting, Jim Blake, gray-faced, with the rest of them. The hammers had stopped. And all the time Bill Rand had tried to stir, had tried to run along the girders and down to where his friend lay; had clung there shivering in the sunlight and felt the world rock about him.

High! Christ, but it was high! He had to get down somehow. He had to get down.

GONGS clanging. The little knot of men on the pavement stooping . . . Clinging to a stanchion Bill Rand had been violently, horribly sick.

He'd got down at last, sweat-drenched. He'd let himself to his knees and leeched his trembling body to a beam where he'd crawled with eyes shut, shamefully, on all fours; had inched himself along the great red web like some monstrous crippled spider. And when he'd felt the gray pavement under his feet he'd fainted, and come to sobbing like a woman. He, Bill Rand—that'd run up steel since he was a kid fifteen, that'd raised iron till he'd thought he was iron himself—had crouched there shivering like a dog and retching, while hot tears had trickled through his fingers and glistened on the greasy stuff of his jumper!

Now all this the gang might have forgiven him in time if it hadn't been that out of that plummet sprawl of Steve's had come—fear. Fear that rode him to a sweat by day and jerked him up shrieking in the night. Fear of high places—of the awful gap that yawns between the heights and safe brown earth. Fear——

Go up again ten, twelve stories and walk around on a three-inch girder? Not him! Why, say, he couldn't go up a ten-foot ladder without gettin' sick at his stomach! High places—Jeez, he hated 'em! High places where the ground reached up and tried to suck you down, whirling, struggling; high places from which a great, red-headed, laughing dare-devil had plunged so horribly. No, he was through. Bill Rand was through. The ground for him from now on.

Yellow? Well, what if it was yellow? What if the men turned from him, passed him up like a dirty chip and sneered at him and called him "Willie"? He didn't care. He could go it alone. What if only Maybelle's lily-fingered crowd would go with him—and since last night not even those, he guessed? He didn't give a damn for any of 'em. Yellow? He was sick, that was it. They didn't understand. None of 'em. Not even Maybelle.

The fat cigar clerk was going now. Bill saw him lean across the counter and try to catch one of her hands in his fat, ringed one. He caught the silver tinkle of her laughter. "Mr. Fresh!" she said. "Say, howdya *get* that way?" Snappy, that was Maybelle. Gee, how sweet she looked today. Sweet enough to eat.

For an instant the space in front of the little stand was empty. He pushed forward, trying to seem careless. "H'lo, Maybelle——"

"We-ell?"

Gee! She didn't need to freeze a guy! Yuh'd think she'd never stood arm in arm with him in front o' Saltzman's window—dollar down, dollar when they catch you—pickin' out their parlor set. A swell one it was, bright blue velour with big gold tassels on the arms. An' now looka the way she was givin' him the ritz!

He edged close to the counter. "Say, Maybelle—about las' night——"

"I don't care to hear about las' night," said Maybelle stiffly, and turned to Bill a profile that sent his heart into his mouth. Gosh, what a cute little nose she had.

"But lis'n, I gotta talk to you. I—I *gotta!*"

"Well?"

"I meant to go up with the rest of you. Didn't I get into the car? Didn't I?"

The girl whirled on him, cheeks blazing. "Yeah! *Didn't* you! And didn't you pile out again like you'd been bit the minute the wheel started to turn? Didn't you jump outa there like somep'n was after you and leave me alone for all my friends to laugh at? 'I'll just sit outside the railin' an' wait,' you says."

"But, kid, you don't understand——"

"Oh, don't I?" Maybelle's eyebrows were little fine pencil-strokes of scorn. "Don't I though! A great big hulk of a guy like you scared to go up in a dinky little Ferris wheel! Why, say, I've took my sister's three-year-

old on that wheel an' he got a kick outa it. And you was *scared!* Well——" she traced a circle on the marble counter with an intent forefinger, "well, we was all made different, I guess. But if I was afraid of a thing like that—I'd be ashamed."

Bill shifted from one foot to the other. He *was* ashamed. He felt like slinking off up an alley? Like slinking off and hiding.

She was so cute and little, so sassy and so dear—how was he going to show her what was in his heart? Why he'd lay down and die for her any day. But he couldn't 'a gone up in that Ferris wheel—he *couldn't*—— How could he make her understand?

He leaned closer, his hands twisting at his straw hat. "Say, Maybelle, you wouldn't want to come to a show with me to-night, wouldya?"

"You're just right I wouldn't!" she flared at him. Her black eyes flashed. "I'll tell the world I wouldn't! After las' night—I'm through!"

"Aw, Maybelle! Gee, kid, you don't want to take it like that! It—it was seein' Steve—that way—I——"

"Jim seen him too, didn't he? I guess him and Jim was just as good friends as you and him, wasn't they? Wasn't they, huh? Well, then——"

"But Jim's different——"

"Different!" Her eyes narrowed, measuring him. Bill couldn't meet their scornful gaze. "Yeah, he's *different* all right. Pa'd lick the hell outa him, big's he is, if he pulled the sorta stuff you do! D'yuh think Pa'd stand for him layin' around for three months without a sign of a job because he was scared to go up high where a regular guy b'longs? Do yuh? Well, he wouldn't, take it from me! The rest o' the day off, when one o' the boys cashes in, and back on the job in the mornin'—that's rules. You know that well's I do.. Did you go back? No, you bet you didn't! *You was scared.*"

THE boy threw up his head, eyes squeezed tight. "God! That first day. The ground reachin' up after me. It got me. That's the only way I can tell you. It *got* me! Jim's different——"

"He ain't yellow, if that's what you mean."

Bill's big hands clenched sharply. A swift tide of hot blood swept over him. He could feel it surge up under the collar of his gray flannel shirt. It was like fire on his cheeks and brow, it pounded in his wrists. He straightened.

"I'll not be botherin' you again," he told the girl stiffly. His eyes were hard and angry, his jaw set. "Good-bye."

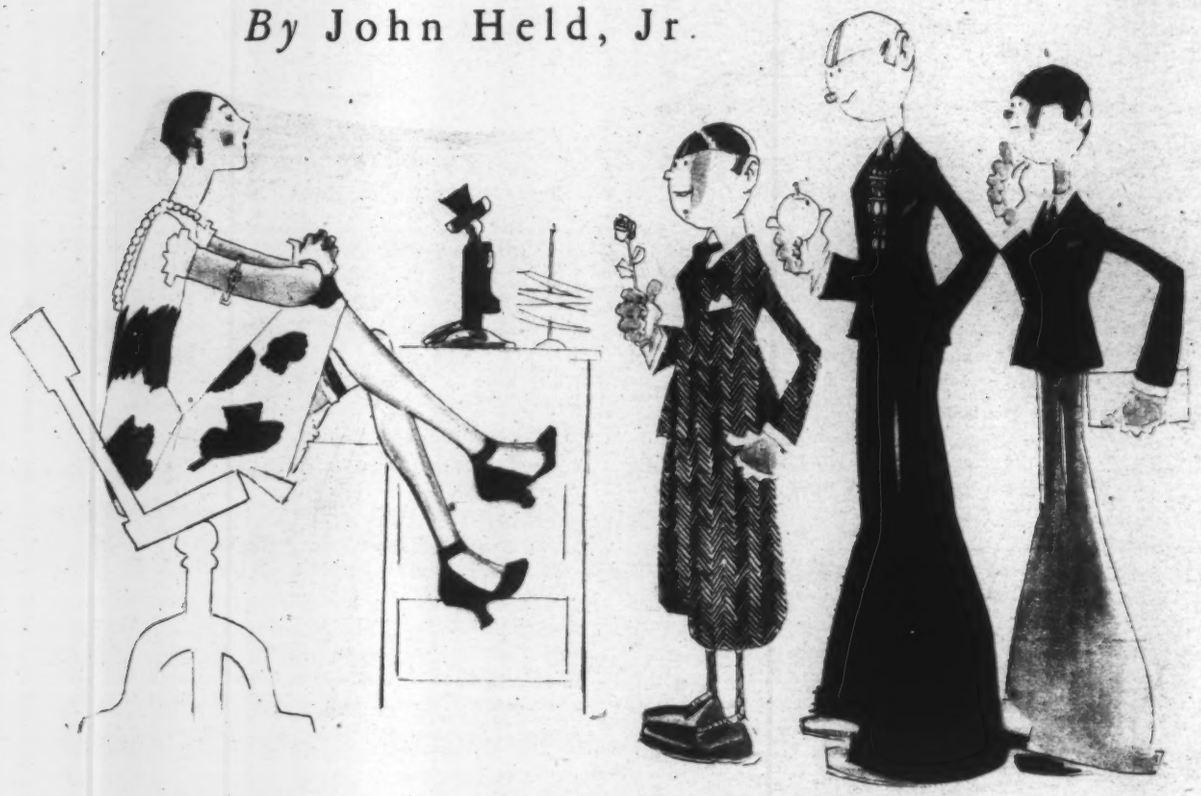
Her hands were caught together under the counter. But her head was high. "All right—go! Beat it because you're afraid to lis'n to what's true! Gee, look at you! Look at them shoulders! Look at them great arms o' yours. An' what're you doin' with them? Huh? I'll tell you! Hangin' 'round a soft-drink stand in the middle o' the day wastin' workin'-time on a skirt! A Willie-boy! That's what you are—a Willie-boy!" She choked. "Beat it!" she shrilled at him. "Beat it quick! I gotta work even if *you* don't!"

He hated her, he told himself, plunging away from her with great furious strides. He was done with skirts. All they did was nag, nag, nag. He was through. Down Market Street to Third, south on Third to Howard—stamping his feet angrily, muttering under his breath. And all the time never dreaming [*Continued on page 116*]

You'd never think they'd picked out their parlor set already—the way she was giving him the ritz.

That McCLURE GIRL

By John Held, Jr.

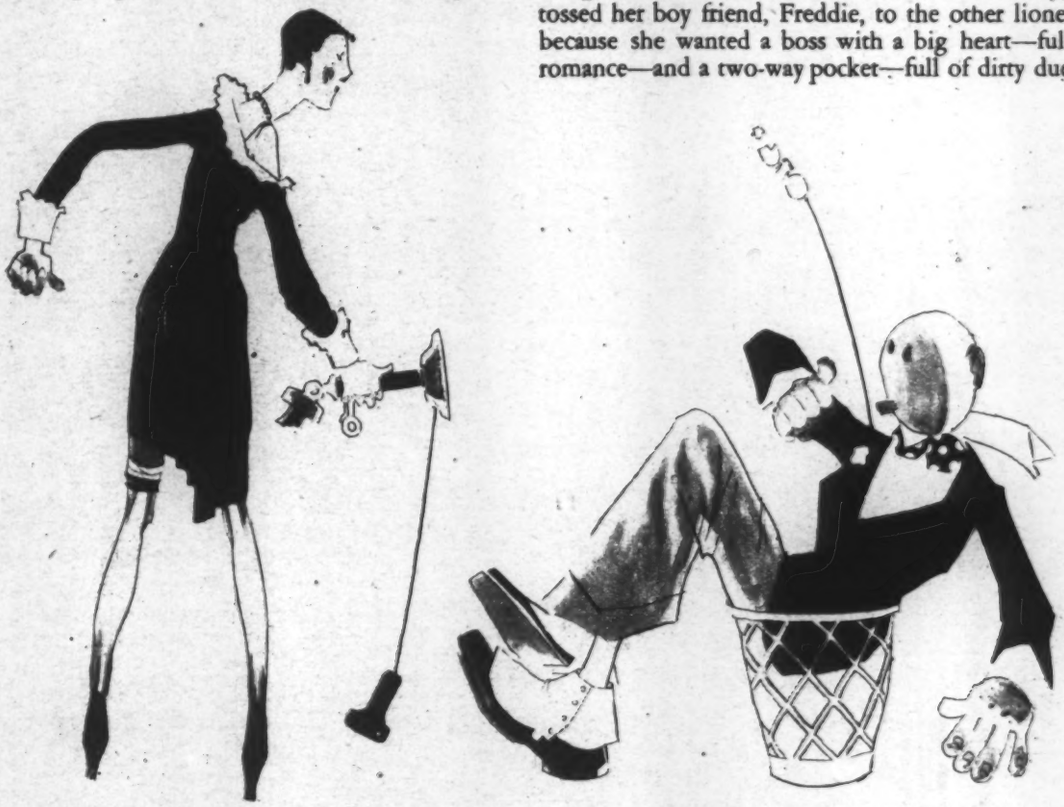


1. *PATSY got the job, all right—and the instant attention of three young Ruddies from the outer office. "You're just too dear—remembering Teacher!" she told them, when every morn they brought her the nearest they could get to violets. "But at the same time you're all wet—especially behind the ears."*

2. *SHE was busily batting out* "Now is the time for all good men to come to the aid of a Certain Party" *when George Weurtz, the casting director, brought the Big Cheese to her shrine and directed him to cast an eye over her work. "Her fingers are as the wind!" said the B. C. a bit romantically, as he looked at her ankles.*

Patsy Makes a Slight Dent in the Theatrical World

¶ Determined to carve herself a large piece of career, Patsy McClure gave up her job as a switchboard girl last month and crept up on a "situation" as amateur typist at the Jigfield Dollies Theatrical Offices. Incidentally, she tossed her boy friend, Freddie, to the other lionesses because she wanted a boss with a big heart—full of romance—and a two-way pocket—full of dirty ducats.



3. *THEN, unlike most cheeses after they've stood around fifty years, the Big Cheese got fresh. Being familiar with telephones, Patsy amputated hers from the desk and massaged the Boss's bald spot with it. "Back in the waste basket with the rest of the dead letters!" she crooned. "I may look like a Callow Lily, but when I spin—boy, how I do reap!"*

(Paddle After Patsy Next Month)

4. *THAT night the casting director and she stepped out where you can't crash in unless you're from Charleston. While she was wondering if the boss would fire her, who should breeze past but her penniless Freddie, twirling a blond jane. "Are you dated tomorrow night?" he asked her. And the question is, was she?*

By WARNER FABIAN

SUMMER BACHELORS

In the First Instalment:

DERRY THOMAS had never been introduced to Tony Landor. She had met him one afternoon shopping. He had been standing beside her at a counter and had unexpectedly offered to buy for her a piece of dress material she wanted and could not afford. Derry had accepted, assured that she would never see him again. But, as she looked back on the bizarre episode, she was not so sure she wished him to prove always invisible.

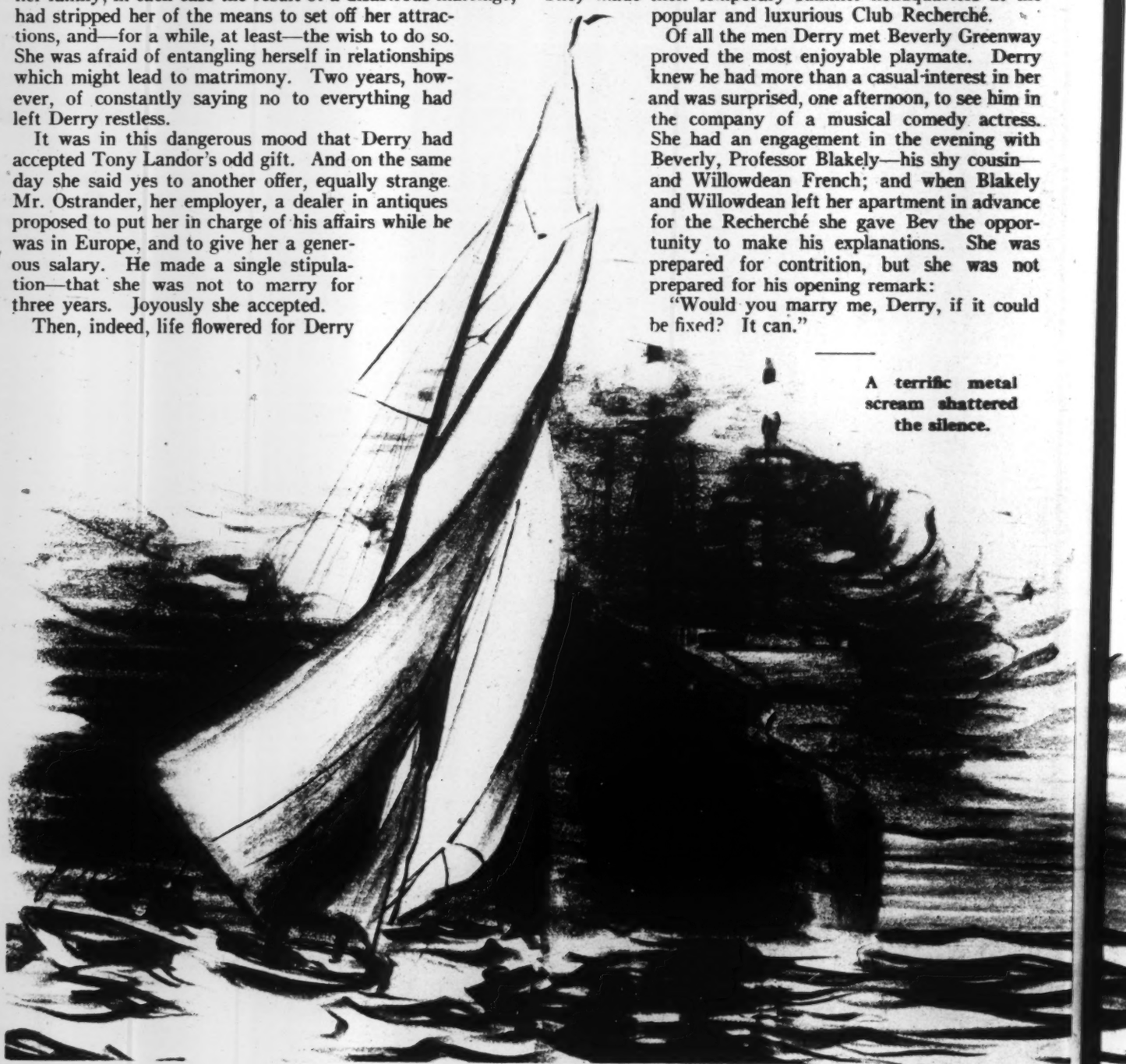
She was not a girl accustomed to such recklessness of expenditure, however, or of conduct. A triple tragedy in her family, in each case the result of a disastrous marriage, had stripped her of the means to set off her attractions, and—for a while, at least—the wish to do so. She was afraid of entangling herself in relationships which might lead to matrimony. Two years, however, of constantly saying no to everything had left Derry restless.

It was in this dangerous mood that Derry had accepted Tony Landor's odd gift. And on the same day she said yes to another offer, equally strange. Mr. Ostrander, her employer, a dealer in antiques proposed to put her in charge of his affairs while he was in Europe, and to give her a generous salary. He made a single stipulation—that she was not to marry for three years. Joyously she accepted.

Then, indeed, life flowered for Derry Thomas. Beverly Greenway, whose acquaintance she had made in business; Preston Smith, alderman of a silk-stocking ward; Martin Cole, playwright, and the lovely Willowdean French, the leading lady of most of his plays; Dick Otley, wealthy dilettante—all these she numbered among her night-club friends after the first few months of her new freedom. In order to evade matrimony, she had allied herself with a gay group of "summer bachelors"—married men, with the single exception of Dick Otley, whose wives deserted New York during the hot season. They made their temporary summer headquarters at the popular and luxurious Club Recherché.

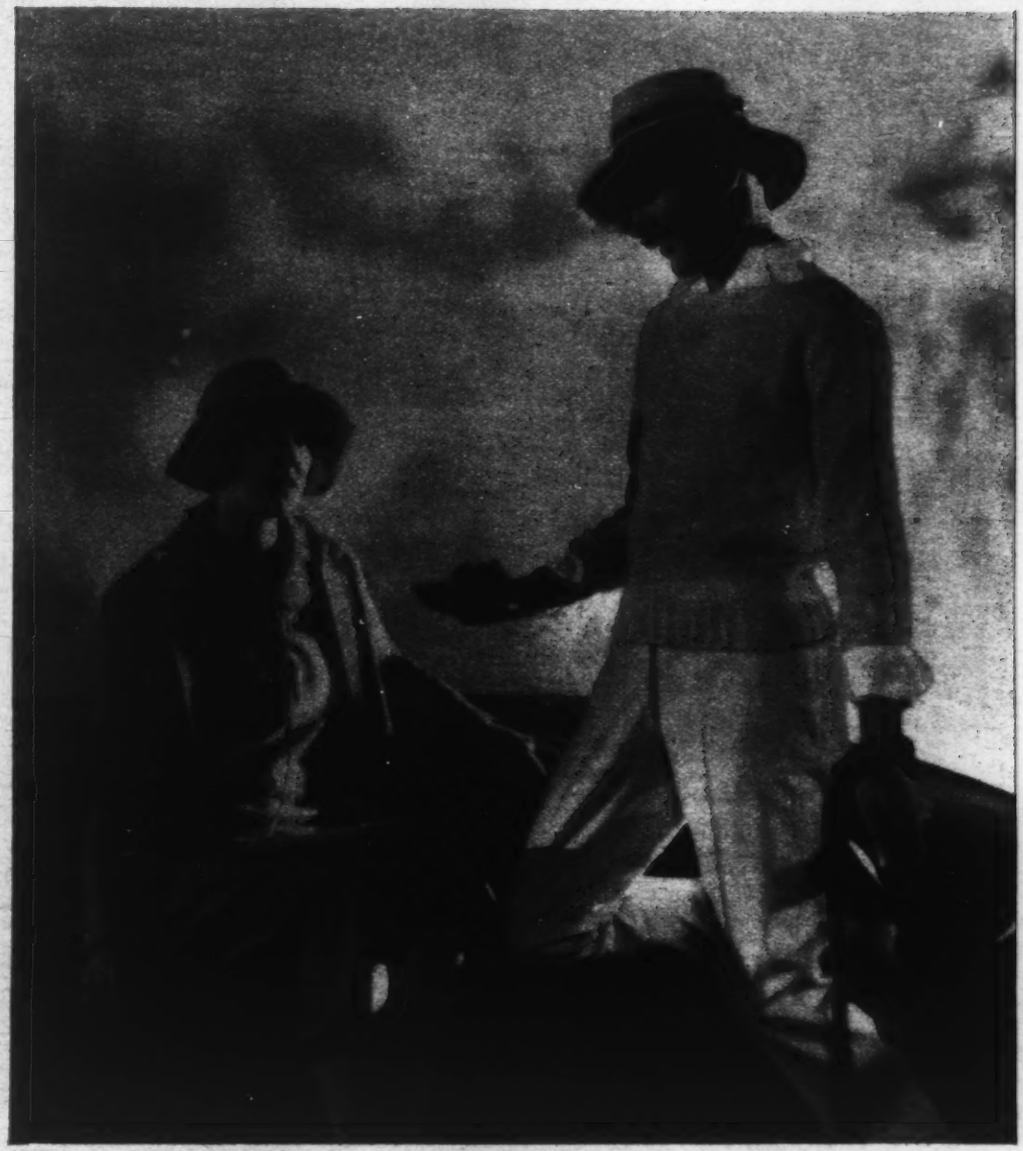
Of all the men Derry met Beverly Greenway proved the most enjoyable playmate. Derry knew he had more than a casual interest in her and was surprised, one afternoon, to see him in the company of a musical comedy actress. She had an engagement in the evening with Beverly, Professor Blakely—his shy cousin—and Willowdean French; and when Blakely and Willowdean left her apartment in advance for the Recherché she gave Bev the opportunity to make his explanations. She was prepared for contrition, but she was not prepared for his opening remark:

"Would you marry me, Derry, if it could be fixed? It can."



A terrific metal scream shattered the silence.

A Great Novel of New York's Night Club Life *by* the Author *of* "FLAMING YOUTH"



"IF IT'S to be a case of force and arms," he observed, eyeing the weapon he had taken from her, "where do you stand now?"

CHAPTER V

DERRY played for time to give her surprised and scattered thoughts opportunity to reform in some sort of order. "That's a thought. But it looks to me like a china egg."

He did not respond to her raillery; he did not even look at her as he answered: "It's real enough. If you were willing to wait—would you be, Derry?" He raised his eyes to her now; such honest, boyish eyes, and so full of pleading and suffering.

"Why, Bev!" she murmured, impressed and softened.

"I've been fighting it since the first minute I set eyes on you. Now there's no fight left in me."

"Were you training for the fight at the Corinthian—with your little amusements?" she inquired blandly.

"I was trying to get you out of my mind," he said gloomily. "I don't want any little amusements. I want *you*."

"There's a slight obstacle, isn't there, in the shape of Mrs. Bev?" Beverly put the question flippantly.

"That could be fixed. It's all over for us two, long ago."

"For you two, perhaps. It usually is, in the marriages that I've seen. But what about the others, to be considered?"

"Aren't any, if you mean children. She didn't want 'em. I did, like the devil. Now," he looked at her with a strange yearning

Drawings by Golinkin

expression, "I'm beginning to be glad it's as it is. I'd so much rather it—it was you."

She flushed and winced. "No, Bev dear. That's no good. I mean I can't marry you; couldn't in any case."

"Don't care enough?"

Her eyes were doubtful. "Marriage is so—so permanent, in prospect. At least, it ought to be. If it were for a year, or two, or three——"

"Can I ask you something, Derry, without your getting shirty about it?"

"Anything in the world, Bev."

"If we'd left Smith's club that night without him, would you have cared where we went?"

"Oh, I hadn't thought it out definitely. It was all part of the joyousness, the freedom, the release of the day. If you'd lived through two years of constantly saying no to everything, however harmless, that you wanted to do, there'd come a time when you'd be inclined to flirt with recklessness."

He stuck doggedly to the main point. "You must have thought a lot of me to take a chance like that."

"I did. I do now," she said softly.

"Well—anyway—I wasn't taking any chances that night on making you hate me—and yourself."

"You're appallingly decent for this day and age, Bev," she mocked, but her regard was warm and kind upon him. The light of mirth went out of it. "A lot more decent perhaps than I am."

"If anybody else said that, I'd crown 'em," he growled. "Are you trying to put it over on me now that you're not decent?"

"Definitions differ so. I'll tell you this, though. I'm not ignorant. Whether or not I'm innocent is my own affair."

His great, dark head waggled its despair. "I don't get any line on you at all, Derry."

"Is it necessary that you should?"

"Seeing that I intend to marry you, sooner or——"

"It's no good, Bev. I'll never marry you."

"THEN I suppose I might as well quit the whole thing and not bother you any more," he said wretchedly.

"No! I don't want you to go away." It broke from her involuntarily.

"But if you don't care enough for me——"

"Don't I? Do I have to marry you to prove that I care? Take me in your arms. Yes! like that. Closer. Oh, I do care Bev!" she breathed. "Only——"

She looked at him inquiringly, but there was no lurking evidence of laughter about him.

Only what? Only that, despite the magnetism, the potent charm of his strength and youth, of his recklessness and his gentleness, something in the roots of her womanhood set up its final line of defense, refusing still to acknowledge him conqueror. She drew away from his lips, but he caught her fiercely back into his embrace and she rested there half-resistant, half responsive to his kisses.

"I love you," he kept saying. "I want you. When, Derry?"

"Why does there have to be any 'when' in that tone of voice?" she fretted. "Never, maybe. If love comes it comes naturally, of itself. It isn't a thing to be calculated and figured on. Oh, dear boy!" she cried, relenting: "Don't look so sunk. If I'm worth having, am I not worth waiting for?"

"I'll wait forever." And she knew that he meant it.

The clock struck a silvery reminder. "We must get on," said Derry. "What will Willowdean say to us for leaving her so long with your queer and solemn professor-bird?"

Men gravitated to Miss Willowdean French. She had the precious faculty of making all kinds feel at ease with her. Stage hands adored her; even the carpenters and electricians, haughty and pampered masters of "in back," took to her on sight. When all this is true of a woman she ought to be marked "Dangerous!" and carry a blinker-light of warning above her head day and night.

Young Professor Blakely appeared to his companion to be oblivious of her special qualities as they got into the taxi. In truth, he was nervously oblivious of everything except his own inner thoughts, concerning which he seemed to be in a state of permanent alarm lest something break in upon them . . . Well, the creature had to be taken care of conversationally for a while, reflected Willowdean, looking sideways at him over her wrap of summer ermine.

"Do you like the Recherché, Professor Blakely?"

"Eh? I beg your pardon." He came slowly out of some retreat of thought. "What is it?"

"It's the place where we're going, you know," she explained sweetly.

"Never been there," he murmured.

Silence. The taxi took a couple of corners on its ear and ran into blocked traffic. More silence.

"Have you——" began Willowdean enterprisingly, and "Do you——" opened Blakely in the same moment. Then both said with great courtesy: "I beg your pardon."

Willowdean was the first to put her shoulder to the wheel again; the woman usually is. "What is your department at college, Professor Blakely?"

"Psychometry."

"It sounds terribly spirited and fascinating."

"It isn't."

Well, that's finished and tucked away in its little bed, thought Willowdean. What next? She wondered what would happen if she let her hand fall carelessly and rest against that other hand, long, nervous and sinewy, at his side. Something, anyway, and something was better than nothing.

As much out of sheer malice as curiosity she tried the experiment. The abstracted professor started, gazed with intent eyes at the small, soft, tempting member, reached over with his other hand and gave it a politely hearty handshake. Gallantly Willowdean struggled to repress screaming laughter, but it was of no avail; she broke, and the taxi driver most unprofessionally turned to stare. He thought it might be hysterics.

"I never ought to have come," said the wretched Blakely, in appeal against the unfair fates.

She conquered the spasm. "If I let you go now," said she, kindly as to a child, "will you run straight home?"

"I haven't got any home."

"You must live somewhere."

"Oh, live! Yes; in one of the clubs while my wife is away for the summer."

Willowdean fairly jumped in her seat. "Are you married?"

He was dazed by her astonishment. "Wh-wh—why, yes."

"How did you *ever* get that way?" she questioned.

"What, married? Why—I—er—in church, you know."

"I suppose so. I meant—never mind what I meant. Now listen to me, Professor Blakely. If I should take you over to the subway entrance and drop you there, what would you do, since you haven't any home?"

"Go back to the laboratory, I suppose."

"To work? At this time of night?"

"It isn't so late. I often work all night."

"And you call that living?"

"I don't know. What else is there to do?"

"I can show you more easily than I can explain. Other nights I grant you! You can work yourself to death any time. But this night is something else again."

"What else?" inquired Professor Blakely patiently.

"You're in charge of Mother. And you don't get loose; not for a minute." In truth she was feeling quite maternal and pitying toward this helpless male creature, and, having found her clue, Willowdean felt immediately at ease.

"This," explained Willowdean as they entered the restaurant, "is the Recherché. You are about to be privileged to buy me a drink."

Boredom had passed. Willowdean was interested and curious, almost sympathetic with this queer, abstracted, remote specimen. It seemed strangely out of type that his dinner coat should be of such impeccable cut and fit, that even his tie should be precisely right. That he

"Are you afraid I might draw you into the spell after me, and we'd both be lost?"
"Yes," he answered her, "I'm afraid."

belonged by birth and training to an easy and gracious world she was sure from sundry instinctive touches of breeding, showing through his absent-minded gaucheries as the gleam of fine metal shows through tarnish of disuse.

She observed him covertly as they seated themselves at their table in the Recherché. She liked his face for its hard-bitten lines so incongruous with his youth and with the vigor of his frame; its fine, direct eyes; its hint of concentration and power. But how tired it was!

His wife must be a selfish pig, she thought, to run away and leave him to work himself to death alone. She wrestled with and overcame a temptation to ask him what Mrs. Blakely was like.

Mounting misgivings beset Walter Blakely as he waited for his companion to give him another lead. What did one say to pampered favorites of the stage? Get them talking about themselves, he had heard.

"Do you like acting, Miss French?"

"Well enough."

"Have you been at it long?"

"Ten years."

This quite dismayed him. He had thought her a girl of twenty, which was bad enough. But an experienced woman of ten years' professional career—why, she must be at least thirty! (The mathematical truth was midway between his two estimates.) What could he find to interest so presumably blasé a mind?

"I love to dance," she averred with purposeful wistfulness. "Did you ever dance—when you were young?"

Blakely blinked. When he was young! What the devil did she think—that he was an octogenarian?

"I do dance," said he stiffly.

The flicker in her eyes blazed into wide astonishment, incredulity. "What, this dance that they're playing? It's the new tango; awfully tricky."

"Not exactly this, perhaps. That is, I haven't danced for several years. But I've no doubt whatever that I could."

"That's the cocktail, boasting recklessly."

Was it the cocktail? Or the perfumed waves of music? Or the haunting, taunting eyes of loveliness, smiling into his?

"I'm sure I could," he insisted.

She reached out and touched his hand with a flutter of white fingers. "General, the Congressional Medal for our hero. There!" she soothed. "You needn't do anything so desperate as all that."

"Do you wish to dance this dance with me or not, Miss French?"

"Woof! like a toy dog. Is that an invitation or a bluff? I'll try anything once, but I warn you now, I won't have my pet and only tootsies ground into the dust. If you tread me under foot I'm off you for life."

Blakely became very earnest. "I have a theory of dancing——"

"Help!"

"Will you give me a chance to explain, if you please?"

"I'll listen, but I won't play."

"It is part of my studies on the subject of rhythm as an influence in hypnosis."

"Are you a hypnotist, too? Perilous person! I've got my fingers crossed."

"Part of my theory is that if one has once absorbed the physical mechanics of rhythm in any form, such as dancing, it can be interpreted and adjusted to any measure by simply subordinating the conscious reflexes and letting oneself be swayed wholly by that measure."

"It sounds perfect in theory. But it's my opinion that the referee will be counting ten over our prostrate forms before the end of round one."

Precisely what happened in the next few minutes she was never quite sure. He set out stiffly though safely. Then the music seemed to catch them both up and mold them to its languorous will. She was drawn closer to him, whether by the influence of the strains, or his conscious effort, or her own volition she hardly knew. But as she felt the sinewy and supple strength of his body against hers, a disconsertingly pleasurable tingle ran through her nerves. She closed her eyes; they opened again reluctantly only when the music drifted away from them as a tide leaves swimmers on the strand. As she sank into

IN THE taxi, Willowdean, as much out of malice as curiosity, let her hand fall carelessly and rest against his.

"I think his middle name is Blah," Derry said loudly. The man in front rose and took off his hat.

her chair she wondered whether the blood would ever get back into her icy fingers.

"Professor Blakely, you're a liar," she whispered. "A liar and a prize josher. You've been having your laugh on the innocent little Broadway jay-bird, haven't you! What did you do to me?"

"You did it yourself. You're an excellent subject."

"I believe you did hypnotize me."

"Certainly not. I shouldn't dream of doing anything of the sort without your consent."

"Could you hypnotize me?" she asked curiously. "Could you?"

"I think so. You're highly sensitized."

She was coming out of her mist now. "Well, I will say that dance was a wow! You taught me some steps there that I'd never seen nor thought of. Sure it's science that you practice in your laboratory, Professor? *I* think it's witchcraft. Will you teach me to fly on a broomstick if I come up to see you? And to make love-philters? And cast spells?"

"You don't need any lessons in that."

"My, *my*-me!" said she admiringly. "You *are* progressing. Come on," she added, as the orchestra rattled into a foxtrot. "We can't afford to miss any of this." She rose and held out her hands to him.

Beverly Greenway, entering with Derry, found their table unoccupied. The former, about to sit down, stood stricken into rigidity.

"Look at them!" he breathed, his eyes on Blakely and Willowdean.

The final crashing chord left them stranded in each other's arms within a few feet of Derry and Bev. Willowdean's face was as the face of a rapt child, the head bent back, the lids of the eyes parted hardly more than the soft-breathing lips. She slowly opened her eyes to fix them on Blakely's face.

"Break!" warned Bev, staccato.

Blakely started, stared, released his partner.

Already a waiter was approaching with a napkin-crowned pail in which the silting ice gave promissory whispers. Coincidental with its arrival Martin Cole made his appearance. With him was a glossy and beautiful actor named Bartram and the ingénue of his new play, Sara McIntyre. At Willowdean's suggestion the three joined them. She cast an anxious look at Cole; to her it was quite evident that he was in one of his most rancid humors.

"Did it go well tonight, Mart?" she asked.

"No!" barked the playwright. "How could it, with a bunch of tailors' dummies [*Continued on page 81*]

ZERO

THE principle invoked by the author of ZERO is one of Nature's cunning little tricks not yet quite understood by physicists and physiologists, but well enough understood to make railway traveling in India comfortable with an outside temperature of 120 degrees, and so well understood by every human body that it keeps its blood from jelling in Death Valley temperatures. Peter Winston, the hero of the story, proved himself a very clever young man.

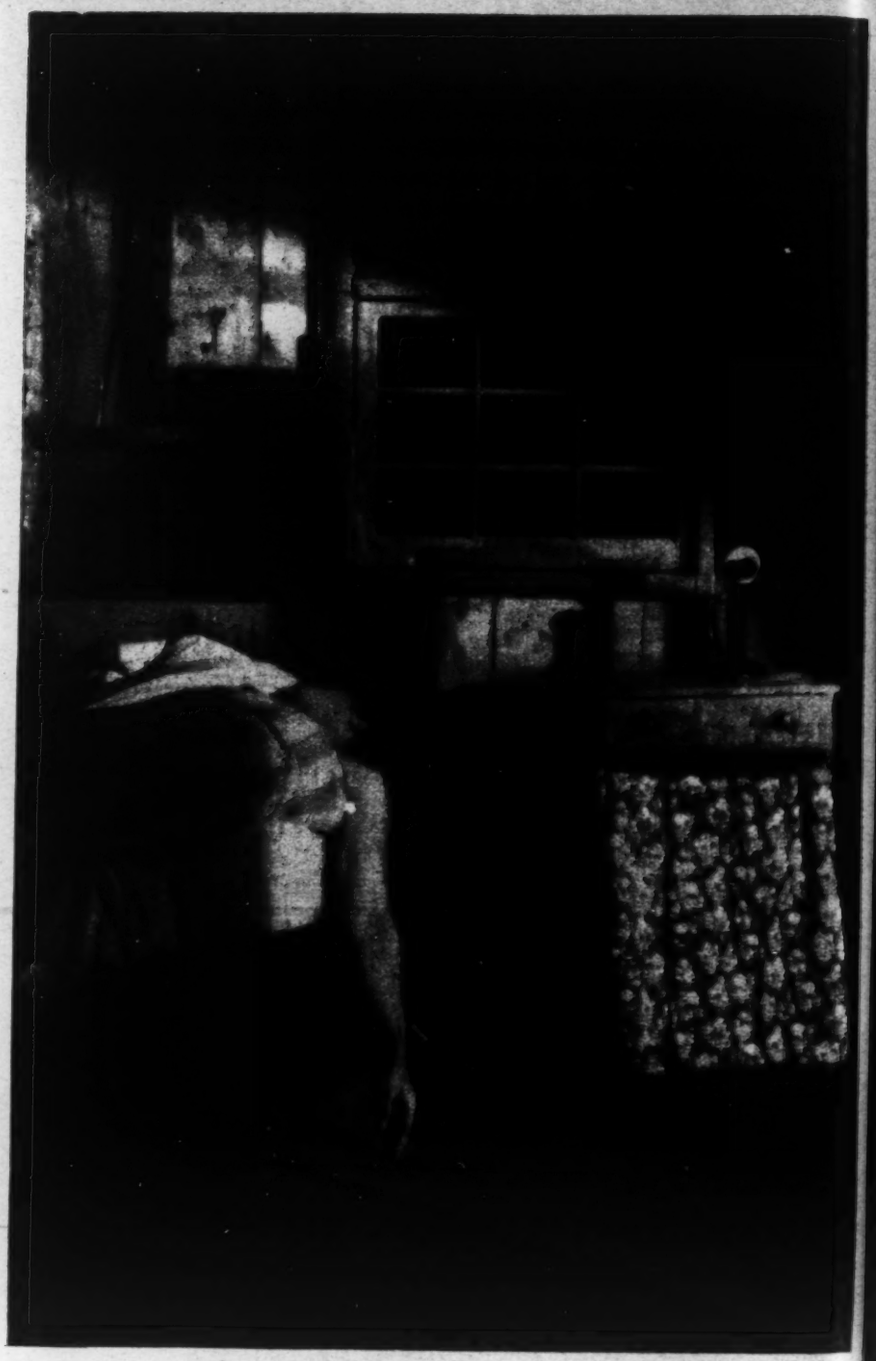
GEORGE A. DORSEY, Ph. D., LL. D.
Former Professor of Anthropology
University of Chicago
Author of
"Why We Behave Like Human Beings."

ALTHOUGH it was not yet eight o'clock, the morning was stifling hot. Across the barren desert valley the heat moved in rustling eddies, kicking up here and there miniature whirlwinds of dust and sudden brief flurries in the crackling mesquite.

Peter Winston pulled down the window shades of the small cabin, to shut out the glare of the sun.

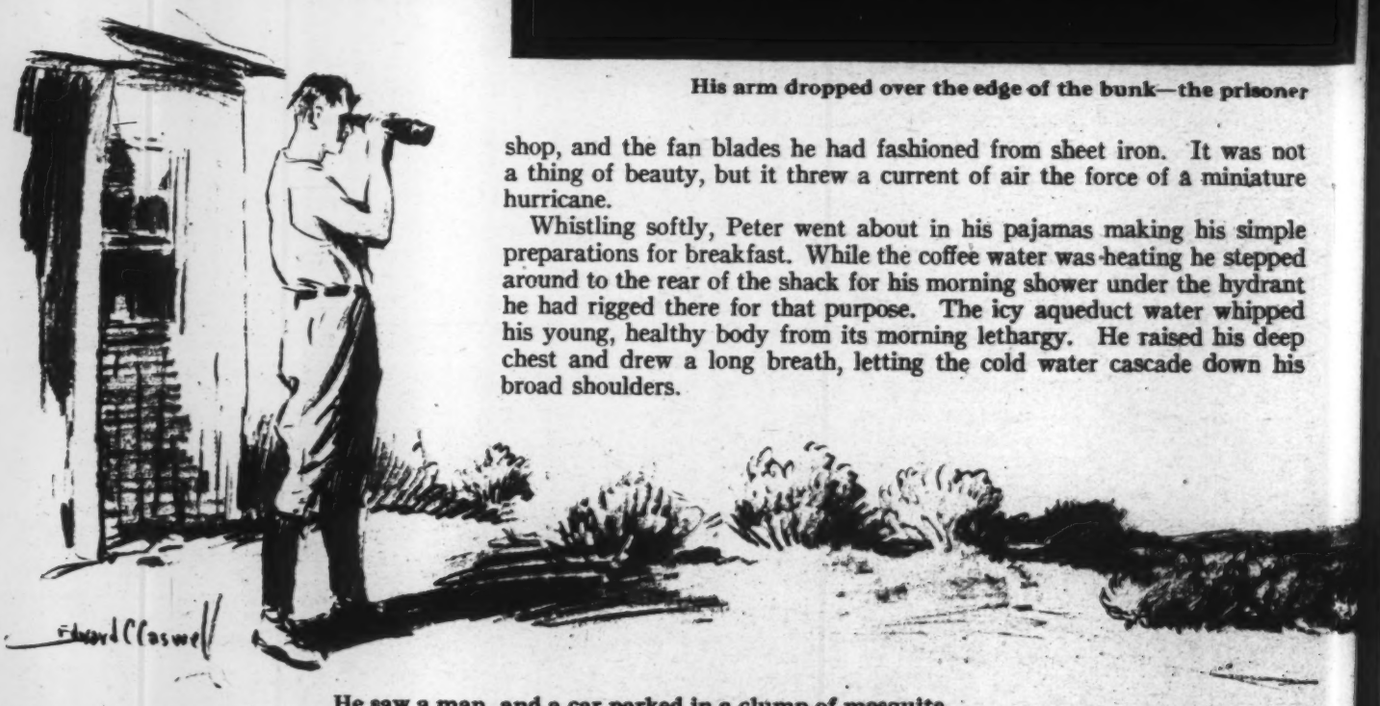
"Whew," he exclaimed as he glanced at the thermometer, "ninety-two! By noon it'll be a hundred and ten."

He reached out his hand and started the electric fan, fastened with three-inch screws to the heavy wooden upright, in the center of the room, that supported the flat roof of the cabin. The fan was a mechanism of home manufacture. The city of Laurencetown did not furnish such humble employées as aqueduct watchmen with electric fans. Peter had picked up the motor in a second-hand shop, and the fan blades he had fashioned from sheet iron. It was not a thing of beauty, but it threw a current of air the force of a miniature hurricane.



His arm dropped over the edge of the bunk—the prisoner

Whistling softly, Peter went about in his pajamas making his simple preparations for breakfast. While the coffee water was heating he stepped around to the rear of the shack for his morning shower under the hydrant he had rigged there for that purpose. The icy aqueduct water whipped his young, healthy body from its morning lethargy. He raised his deep chest and drew a long breath, letting the cold water cascade down his broad shoulders.



He saw a man, and a car parked in a clump of mesquite.

under the fan crumpled at the foot of the column.

By CARL CLAUSEN

—when what seemed the *End* of *Life* became the *Beginning* of *Love*

While toweling himself, he glanced down the right-of-way of the aqueduct, the two miles of reinforced concrete conduit he was paid a hundred and fifty dollars a month to guard. Not far away he saw the smoke of a camp fire. He paused, towel in hand, wondering who it might be that chose to be abroad in the Puente desert in the middle of August.

A prospector, was his first thought. Still, he knew that this lonely and barren part of the Puente was rarely visited by prospectors even in winter.

When partly dressed, he examined the man through his binoculars. He was puttering about a camp fire, and a small car was parked in a near-by clump of mesquite. Again he wondered what manner of man might be trying to cross the desert by auto at this time of the year.

As the coffee pot, boiling over on the stove, demanded his attention, he laid the binoculars down.

While he ate breakfast his eyes wandered out of the window to the eight-foot conduit gleaming in the morning sun. It wound across the sere and brown bosom of the desert like some great drinking horn of the Vikings to pierce the hills two miles away. He noted that the column of smoke was gone, but a faint, veil-like streamer of it still hung low over the chaparral, suspended on the motionless air as if it had been drawn there by the stroke of a brush.

No thought of trouble entered his mind, but as guard of the two mile section of exposed conduit, it was his duty to keep himself informed of the movements of all persons passing that way. The people of Laurencetown had twenty million dollars invested in this new three-hundred mile aqueduct, and certain sinister forces had been at work to throw discredit—and worse—upon the engineers and the administration that had built it.

Peter decided to walk over and call upon the stranger before it became too hot.

Breakfast over, he put the dishes away. The butter and bacon he carried to his iceless refrigerator, an ingenious affair of his own devising. It was simply a large earthenware crock covered with several thicknesses of burlap, which he kept wet by a drip from a faucet above it. It stood on a small platform on the west side of

Drawing by Edward C. Caswell

the shack, from which direction the prevailing winds blew. The hot desert air passing through the wet burlap caused refrigeration by quick evaporation.

Keeping things cold by this method—*ollas*, such receptacles are called—is as old as the hills and well-known to all desert dwellers. Paradoxical as it may seem, the hotter the day the colder the interior of the earthen-ware crock. Out of curiosity, one exceptionally hot day, Peter had placed the thermometer in it. When he took it out, half an hour later, it had dropped to thirty-eight degrees Fahrenheit, despite the fact that the surrounding atmosphere was well over a hundred.

The cabin in order, Peter glanced at his watch and noted that it was time for his morning report. He smiled as he went to the telephone, turned the crank, and took the receiver off the hook.

"Station Eleven, Winston reporting," he said formally, and a feminine voice at the other end of the wire repeated as formally:

"Station Eleven. Winston. Time, nine-two." Then not so formally, "two minutes late, Pete."

Peter laughed.

"I knew you wouldn't be on duty until nine this week, Jenny, so I waited."

"'S'against the rules," said Jenny. "What excuse shall I put down?"

"Tell 'em I don't like the night girl's voice," Peter replied.

"I'm afraid that wouldn't look good on my report sheet. Besides, she's red-headed," Jenny came back.

"Well, my watch is slow; how's that?"

"Much better. Western Union time, nine-three," she replied, briskly.

Peter repeated the time after her, then said:

"My vacation starts next Saturday, the same as yours. They are sending Hogan down from the surge chamber to relieve me."

A pleased gasp was transmitted back to him over the hundred miles of wire.

"How did you manage it, Peter?"

"Witchcraft," he replied. "How about a week at Catalina? I telephoned mother last night. She said she'd be glad to keep house for us and act as chaperone. That'll leave us free to loaf for a week."

"It'd be lovely, Peter!"

"Then it's all settled."

"All except the ring and the orange blossoms," a peevish voice interjected. "If you're finished billing and cooing with that cuckoo at Station Eleven, lady, I wish you'd slip my requisition for two carloads of cement through to the purchasing department. I've got a gang of *cholos* standin' around talkin' union in ninety in the shade."

"That's McGrath at the intake," the girl whispered, as she plugged in and gave the caustic Scotchman the purchasing department. "See you at noon."

Peter hung up the receiver with a smile on his lips. He and Jenny "saw" each other three times a day by wire when he called up to report—in the morning, at noon and at six in the evening. Hearing Jenny's voice three times a day helped to make life endurable for him at Station Eleven. Peter was anything but a solitary. He had taken the position as aqueduct guard because it gave him spare time to pursue his studies. He had finished his sophomore year at Berkeley, and his first two college years had all but finished him—financially.

He had accepted the lonely post because there was nothing else to do. In a year he would be able to save enough to see him through his junior and senior years. Six months of the year had passed now, and he was beginning to like it. As there was nothing to do but patrol the line and report by telephone three times a day, he found ample time to study. Physics were his hobby and he had turned the little shed-like annex on the shady side of the cabin into a small, but complete laboratory, where on cool days and in the evening he conducted his experiments. Here he gained first hand knowledge that would be invaluable to him later.

A PLEASED gasp was transmitted back to him over the hundred miles of wire. "It'd be lovely, Peter!"

Station Eleven was also responsible for the coming into his life of something very sweet and beautiful. When a man sits alone in the middle of the desert and hears the sound of one human voice, and one only, three times a day for months, and when he furthermore is young and imaginative, and the voice is a girl's, something is bound to happen. It had happened.

Peter had every other Sunday off. On the second and fourth Saturday afternoons of each month, Hogan came down from the surge chamber in his gasoline lorry to relieve him. Then Peter ran down to Laurencetown in the lorry, and spent Saturday evening and all day Sunday with Jenny and his mother.

He tilted his chair back against the heavy wooden upright and abandoned himself to the contemplation of the Catalina trip. During his last Sunday visit he and Jenny had come to a definite understanding. There was to be a modest wedding sometime in the future. Even the discussion of it had left both breathless, and Peter had returned to his post feeling inches taller. He had . . .

"Throw up your hands and sit still," said a gruff voice from the door behind him.

Peter's muscles stiffened automatically. His first impulse was to turn around and face the owner of the voice, but instinct told him his life would be the forfeit if he did. His left hand, clutching the arm of the chair, relaxed slowly and rose in the air. The right followed suit with the same unwilling slowness. Then he felt something hard, which he knew was the muzzle of a pistol, pressed against the back of his head.

"You're slow to obey orders," the voice said unpleasantly. "Get up and kick that chair away . . . now back up against the post."

In a half daze Peter had obeyed. Now he felt the touch of cold metal about his right wrist, and heard the soft click as a handcuff snapped shut. His arms were jerked backward. The second handcuff clicked around his left wrist.

The back of his head touched the heavy wooden upright to which the electric fan, and now he, himself, were fastened.

The stranger stepped in [*Continued on page 123*]

The Cow-Puncher Still Lives—
and He has a Line that Ropes
Hearts as well as Steers

A Sheik in a Sombrero

By OLGA MOORE

"EXCUSE me, lady," said the cow-puncher; and Fiji suddenly felt herself, bouquet and all, scooped clear of the earth in a powerful grasp and thumped down abruptly on the pony in front of its rider. Her face was pressed hard against a flannel shoulder that scratched her, and an arm like steel held her small figure in a vise.

"It ain't ladylike to kick my horse that way," said the voice above her. And she caught the startled plunge of the pony as it swung into a lope.

From sheer astonishment, Fiji neglected to struggle. The man had appeared so miraculously from the vast sea of cattle that she had not had time to protest. She had

"Do come in and have—" she glanced at Mildred for approval—"a biscuit."

only noted fleetingly that his teeth were very white.

"And," she thought sagely against the flannel shirt, "better be kidnaped than tramped to death. Can't tell me those cattle didn't mean murder!"

After some minutes of rapid riding, her abductor slowed his pace and shifted his position, giving her a chance to extricate her nose from his vest pocket. She was deeply aware, however, that it was still his shoulder that supported her and still his arm that held her.

They had topped a rise overlooking the silver and lavender stretches of the Nine Mile. Below them, in a curving caravan, marched the herd, advancing in a mighty column, with a faint cloud of dust hovering goldenly at its flanks.

THE man smiled down into Fiji's face—he was a handsome creature, lithe and supple as a dancer. "Well," he said calmly, "the parade is over. Where do you live? I'd be right pleased to see you home."

Beguiling eyes had Fiji—long, narrow, gray eyes that she could deepen or darken at will.

"Do—do you think your cows can spare you?" she breathed doubtfully.

"They must learn to look out for themselves," said the cow-puncher. "They're great, big grown-up cattle now and they oughtn't to be so helpless. It wouldn't hardly be right," he continued reasonably, "to let a little bit of a girl like you walk home alone, all bowed down by a bouquet. And then I expected I've carried you out of your way a spell. Which of these shacks do you live in?" He nodded at the scattering of tiny homesteader cabins dotting the plains, their unpainted lumber flashing against the gray and violet of the sage.

"I live in that very beautiful house with the terrace and the tennis-court," she said airily, waving her hand. "It represents an Italian villa just now, but we're going to have it done over in the early Colonial period next fall."

Noting his expression of bewilderment, she hastened to explain. "It's that littlest cabin over there against the bluff. Can you follow my finger? It's got a white washing on the line. All the others, you will notice, have blue washings. We haven't any overalls in our family."

"I get you," he said gratefully, flicking the horse. "The Nine Mile's so full of homesteaders now you trip over a new batch every time you come along. Used to be we had every shack located for a hundred miles but now it's almost like them tenement districts in Omaha. Pretty soon we'll have to build elevated trails for our cattle—or run 'em through tunnels."

"Why do you have to take them around over the country so much?" demanded Fiji. "Do you do it just to give them an airing? Or to teach them geography?"

"We're takin' 'em to summer pasture in the mountains;" he informed her, "since the range has all been homesteaded it's the only way we can fix the grazin' problem. A steer needs a heap of territory for his dinner table." A faint resentment was in his voice—the hostility of the range man who sees his acres menaced. Sternness was becoming to him, Fiji thought, studying him covertly.

He caught her glance and returned it levelly. "Shall we be gettin' along?" he asked. She flashed a gay smile.

"Home, James," she said audaciously, leaning back against his shoulder.

"I always let my friends call me Jim," he assured her generously.

"He's either got the hottest line I've heard," she informed herself, "or else he's one beautiful blankness. I suppose

Dad Thompson, in a Prince Albert, was quadrille

Drawings by Ross Santee

Fiji suddenly felt herself scooped clear of the earth, her face pressed hard against a flannel shoulder.

announcer. Jim paid marked attention to a little girl, the very curve of whose tilted cheek expressed adoration for him.

he's one of these strong and inscrutable sons of the desert. At that, he's worth trying out."

"How did you come to be sashayin' around on foot?" he broke into her revery. "Was you takin' your bouquet out for an airin'—or was you teachin' it geography?"

His mouth was straight and unsmiling, but imps leaped in the blue gleams of his eyes.

"It's line—not blankness," decided Fiji mentally, giving him another shy glance.

"Oh, Benvenuto Cellini!" she said. "He vanished—absconded—disappeared—eloped—beat it—how do you say it—vamoosed!" she spread her hands in an eloquent gesture of dismissal.

"That was sure an unreasonable way for him to act," sympathized the tall cow-puncher. "Who is this here flighty friend of yours?"

"My horse," sighed Fiji. "He ran away while I got off to pick this larkspur. I don't see how he could do a thing like that."

"The dirty houn'!" he murmured in tones of horror and amazement.

Unconsciously his arm about her tightened protectively. "You poor little tike! This has been the devil of a day for you, hasn't it? First deserted by a no 'count horse, then nearly smashed by a herd of cattle and finally lugged off by a ignorant son-of-a-gun that ought to howl with the coyotes!"

"The devil of a day, Brother!"

The cow-pony jogged along smoothly, and in a few more moments they had arrived at Fiji's shack.

Mildred, her claim-mate, pretty and prim in a blue gingham dress, carrying a plate of biscuits, came to the door, in breathless amazement at this latest appearance of her versatile partner.

She saw Fiji riding in state, her arms poetically full of blossoms and her curly head resting on the shoulder of a gorgeous cow-puncher.

"HI, MILDRED, meet Jim," requested the prodigal, clambering down amid snorts and tremblings on the part of the horse. She looked back at her escort with an affected smile.

"So glad you called," she said graciously. "Awfully sweet of you to look us up, y'know. Do come in and

Jim was doing his best by Jobyna — trying to make the child happy.

have—" she glanced at Mildred for approval—"a biscuit," she finished smoothly.

"Please do!" came Mildred to her support.

"I sure ain't got no grudge against biscuits," the man declared. Mildred led him in, took his hat and placed him in a chair. Fiji had darted to some place to put her mangled flowers in water.

"Where did Fiji find you?" asked Mildred. It was significant, though he did not know it, that she did not say: "Where did you find Fiji?"

"Oh, we was comin' along with our herd of cattle," said the cow-puncher with the twinkle of an amused memory in his eye, "an' we nearly run her down. It sure gave me a start when I saw her standin' there, about as big as a minute, clutchin' her bouquet an' defyin' the world. Her horse had lit out on her, she said."

Fiji appeared suddenly from the inner room, dragging a comb through her mop of frivolous bobbed hair. "I just happened to think," she said sweetly, "that I have not yet offered to marry you for saving my life." The man's jaw fell in utter stupefaction. After a moment, a red glow struggled through the tan of his face and his grin had an odd touch of fright in it.

He sighed and looked about the room. It was a pleasant, cool little haven, entirely different from any homesteader shack he had ever seen.

A phonograph occupied one corner of the room. Chintz hung at the windows and there were cushions and gay little scarfs, and the rough boarding of the walls was hidden in spots by college pennants and emblems, and by pictures of all colors and sizes. A silver trophy cup sat on a shelf, and a large picture of Fiji in basketball bloomers grinned down at him from the mantel. Candlesticks of queer art-finish occupied every available space and there were two little pine-board bookcases full of books.

But what most dominated the room were the photographs of men in silver frames crowding the shelves. In suave evening suits they postured, in the padded deformity of football togs, in brief track suits, in white flannels with tennis rackets swinging at their sides, in street clothes, masquerade costumes and academic sweaters. Sometimes the youths featured in snap-shots were linking arms with laughing girls—and as often as not these girls were Fiji and Mildred.

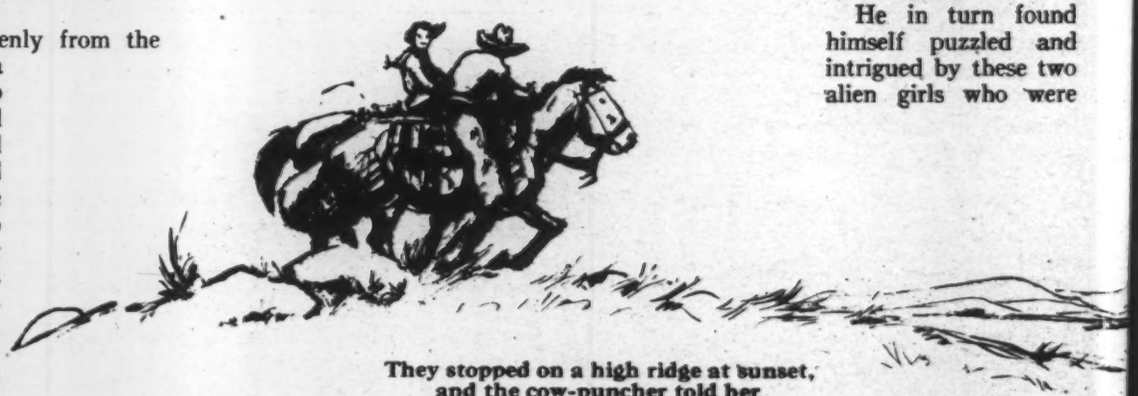
And then Fiji reappeared. He gasped at the change she had wrought in four short minutes. She still wore her riding breeches, but she had done something miraculous to her face. The dust and the hot flush had completely disappeared, leaving her cool and delectable, exquisitely flushed with rose. Her frenzied blond hair had been coaxed into neat little curls and was demurely bound by a ribbon.

"Drug stores are a great invention, aren't they?" she said enigmatically in answer to his expression. "Mildred, where's the pickles? And the good ol' strawberry jam? An' don't you suppose we can open a can of tuna fish for the kind stranger?"

It was a gay little meal that followed, happy and irresponsible, crowded with laughter and nonsense. Fiji's larkspur in an improvised vase made of a fruit jar occupied the center of the table. Mildred's biscuits, a creamy tan on top and white as foam inside, formed the *pièce de résistance*.

The two girls between bites stole appraising glances at their guest, whose picturesque figure, with his bold blue eyes and fringy chaps, seemed to fill the cabin. And if his bigness and his strangeness, his lusty air of animal good spirits and his silent air of power seemed incongruous in that frilled little room, it gave only an added dash of novelty to the occasion.

He in turn found himself puzzled and intrigued by these two alien girls who were



They stopped on a high ridge at sunset, and the cow-puncher told her the things in his mind.

his hostesses. They talked differently from the women he had known. They said things which started out to make sense and then ended all wrong.

In a breathless rush of soft little exclamations they told him why they had come to Wyoming. Mildred's father had sent her to a dude ranch to rest up after a particularly exhausting round of winter activities, and Fiji had gone with her. When they returned to the city, their enthusiasm—over-exuberant and too frequently voiced—had goaded their weary friends into suggesting that they try a little *real* Western life. They had risen to the implied insult, and come to Nine Mile to show the "crowd" that they could and would live on a homestead. The gauntlet had been flung, and they had accepted the challenge. It was a wager—a bet—a dare. It was all kinds of a lark, they told him. Of course it was hard—they had had to hire somebody to build their cabin and put up their fence. And they had to remember such queer things as getting someone to haul their coal, and thinking to look for wood when they were out hiking. They even had to haul water, because they couldn't use any more of their allowance to sink a well and the water they caught from the infrequent rains didn't taste good.

"Though it's wonderful to wash your hair," they told him earnestly. They owned a little flivver and carried water from a neighbor's five miles away.

Of course they missed such luxuries as electric curling irons, ice-cream sundaes, movies, manicurists, musical comedies and tennis-courts, but otherwise they were bearing up nobly and were thriving on their Spartan fare.

"We really get an awful wallop out of the primitive," Fiji assured him, clasping her hands about a boyish knee and tilting back in her chair.

He grinned indulgently. What an idea! Two slim girls to tackle the Nine Mile—smiling land that had broken strong men and had lured fortunes to destruction. Two impudent little flappers to set small feet on a soil that had never known conquest—and to do it on a dare! He shook his head. "The plucky little devils," he muttered, "and they're kinda cute too."

He pushed back his chair at last with mingled haste and reluctance. "I'll have to be lopin' on," he said sadly, "or I'll never catch up with the herd. The boys'll sure devil me for stayin' this long."

He smiled enchantingly at Mildred. "Lady, those biscuits was the best I've ever corralled. It isn't often the boys out here gets to sink their teeth in the like of them. Some day when the round-up wagon's near, I aim to have you over to dinner so you can eat Dutch Henry's—and laugh yourself to death."

Turning to Fiji, he looked at her gravely and said: "I hope you'll practice real hard and learn to make biscuits as good as hers. I'm real particular about my biscuits."

"What's the big idea?" demanded that young person, fluffing her cocksure curls at him.

"You're goin' to marry me for saving your life," he reminded her. And with this parting broadside he swung on his horse. Fiji placed a hand upon her hip and stared after him.

"Not so bad," she murmured at last.

Some twenty minutes later he was back, leading the errant Benvenuto, that gay and irresponsible young horse, who deceitfully expressed joy at being home again.

"You stubborn little devil," he exclaimed tenderly. "You ought to be spanked!"

"I just happened to think," called the cow-puncher, "that my last name is Harris. And I work for the Lazy V. I guess I kinda forgot to introduce myself."

"Charmed to meet you, Mr. Harris," acknowledged Fiji languidly.

"Jim to my friends," he grinned and, wheeling sharply, galloped away over the blossoming billows of the Nine Mile.

"His exits are fair," remarked Fiji thoughtfully.

"He's adorable," voted Mildred, "but Fiji, you'd better change. We're invited over to Claridges' for dinner tonight. Forgot to tell you."

Fiji was one of the Nine Mile's most sensational inhabitants. The very audacity of [*Continued on page 111*]

"This Is

By
Homer
Croy

HERE is Mr. Croy shooting out deathless words into the air, that went he knew not where—perhaps "West of the Water Tower."

Photos by Strand Studio, courtesy of Station WJZ, N. Y.

FOR a long time all that I knew about radio was what I got from a set of earphones and a loud speaker, and then I was called on to broadcast. I went several times to the studios and was surprised to learn what a busy little world it is—and how many interesting things that take place around a studio don't find their way to the air.

There was the case of the juggler, for instance.

"Audition" is a fashionable word in use around the studios. It means rehearsal. No studio manager, or studio announcer, with the least vestige of pride, would use such a common, plebian word as "rehearsal."

And the kinds of people who come to a studio for an audition! In other days they used to come to the theaters to demonstrate that the spoken drama was overlooking great interpretive artists—themselves; later they began to turn up at the motion picture studios, and now the tide has turned to the broadcasting stations. They come from everywhere and they represent all classes in life. What an amazing assembly—flappers, freaks, Business Men with a Message, and proud mammas with infant prodigies.

The queerest of all turned up recently—the juggler.

"How are you going to put your stuff on the air?" asked the astonished studio manager.

"Why," said the misunderstood artist, "I'll tell 'em what I'm doing and then if I *drop* anything they'll know I missed."

He was given the air—just outside the door, and the only thing he dropped was a tear.

CAREFUL statistics show that studio managers shoot themselves early.

An example of why they do happened recently to J. F. Seebach, the genial announcer for Station WOR, in Newark, New Jersey. It is the custom of that studio to send out calls for missing persons—if those calls are legitimate and come from such organized bodies as, for instance, the Bureau of Missing Persons.

One day Mr. Seebach was standing before the microphone, making an announcement, when a woman in a violent state of agitation came dashing into the room.

"Oh, please, please," she said rushing at him. "You send out calls for missing persons, don't you?"

"Yes, madam," said Mr. Seebach, finishing his announcement and rushing to the distracted lady's side.

"Then please help me. I want you to send out a distress call for Missy."

"Who?" asked the announcer.

"Missy," she cried. "She's been lost since yesterday morning. She's been stolen and I'm afraid she will be killed!"

"She is your child?"

"No, no!" cried the distressed woman. "She's my dog. Oh, please send out a call before something *terrible* happens to her."

Of course, the call wasn't sent out and the public never knew of the great tragedy that had entered the home life of that once happy Newark family.

AT STATION WJZ, in New York, Milton J. Cross, announcer for that famous institution, told me of something that happened to him as an example of "studio stuff" that is never given the freedom of the air.

Arrangements had been completed for the appearance of a star of the Metropolitan Opera. When she arrived at the studio she was large and impressive and as full of temperament as a football of air. She was taken into the sound-proof room and not a cloud was in the sky. She had with her her orchestra, and she further explained that she could not sing unless left alone during those temperamental moments with her orchestra. Thus the first cloud

STATION C-R-O-Y!"

Giving the Freedom of the Air to Untold Tales of the Radio Room

appeared, for the announcer must stay in the sending room to manipulate the switches and to see that the show goes on.

Mr. Cross announced her, put her on and then stepped behind her line of vision so that her sensitive soul would not be disturbed. As she sang, she put what artists call "expression" into her work—she waved her hands, she tore at her clothes and clutched at her heart.

Suddenly in the midst of an aria she happened to turn so that her eye caught sight of Mr. Cross. She began waving for him to get to glory out of here. But he could not go—he must stick with the ship. And then, still singing and sending up her golden notes, the perturbed lady *shooed* him out of the room and finished her song, while poor Mr. Cross, the hero of a thousand song battles, stood helplessly just outside the door.

Of course, the great radio audience listening to the famous diva knew nothing of the little comedy of shoo-fly-shoo going on behind the scenes.

AND such is fate—that is, Microphone Fate—that a few days later Marion Talley, the girl who made Kansas City famous, came to the studio to sing. She was given an audition and was as simple and as unaffected as Grandma darning socks.

"Where do you want me to stand?" she asked.

Miss Talley was moved back and forth in the front of the microphone until exactly the right distance was found. The song, of course, was not put on the air—it was merely sent into the adjoining room where the studio experts listened and made their final adjustments. A cross mark was chalked on the carpet where the microphone pedestal had rested, and then a circle was drawn on the carpet where Miss Talley had stood and inside the circle was written the word "Talley"—no more and no less. These marks remained on the carpet until the next evening when Miss Talley came again to the studio and shot her song into the air, and it went I know not where. Mr. Cross stood right at her side, and everything was as lovely as a honeymoon in Normandy.

Of such different feathers are song birds.

THOSE Business Men with a Message are the most frequent studio pests. They have made after-dinner speeches at dinners which their employees have attended—and the storm of applause was almost deafening—and so they come to the broadcasting studios wanting to impart their messages to a wider world. They can't get it into their heads why the studio managers are such Dumb Dicks—why, say the Great Exec's, just two nights ago they delivered this same address before the Brooklyn office of their organization and it went BIG! Now, that's the kind of stuff you should have on your radio.

HOMER Croy, the noted novelist, wearing his broadcasting expression.

THE second most frequent studio pests, according to the authorities at WEAF, are the saxophone players. It would seem, if you hang around a broadcasting studio a while, that the whole world has turned to pushing wind into that unfortunate instrument. The public, complaining sometimes at the poor programs that come to it, doesn't realize the great suffering that it has been spared.

And a strange thing about it is the number of saxophone players who come in informing the broadcasting station that they played with the original Brown Brothers sextet. The announcers get a smile out of it, and wonder how long it would that take original sextet to pass a given point.

EVEN if a studio manager has his troubles with studio pests, he also has his thrills, which the general public never knows about.

There are mash notes, for many of the letters which used to go to the movie stars are now headed toward the broadcasting studios. People wearing earphones fall in love with a voice—it jingles pleasantly in their ears evening after evening and then they want to see what kind of a face that voice has, and a sweet-scented little note is dropped into the iron box at the corner.

Recently an announcer at Station KOA, in Denver, received a dainty epistle from a young lady saying that his voice had thrilled her as no other voice ever had. Would he be good enough to send her an autographed photograph of himself?

The photograph was sent forthwith. But then another letter arrived, telling how the picture now reposed on her dresser, and would he think her too bold if she asked him to meet her on a corner some afternoon when his work was over? She would come by presently wearing a red, red rose.

Radio announcers are only human and so, the great day arriving, the young man, walking on air, came down the street and took up point duty, his heart sending up into the ether happy little messages on its own account.

Promptly to a minute a figure appeared, and there the red rose rested proudly.

But the young man's eager heart gave a kick that almost keeled him over, for the lady with the rose was almost old enough to be the announcer's mother and had a face that wouldn't launch a rowboat.

And that was another choice incident that was never given the freedom of the air.

The Colonel's

By

Drake de Kay

(former Lieutenant of Infantry, A. E. F.)

THE Colonel's first impression was of a woman's eyes—tender and reproachful.

SEATED at his field desk in Headquarters that hot July day of 1918, Colonel "Hanger" Hatfield glanced at his wrist watch. It was twelve-forty. The three battalions would be nearing their drill grounds, swinging along the poplar-lined *route nationale* that stretched, a day's march to the Marne, southward through rolling fields of wheat and beets.

Just under middle height, his heavily built figure suggested power rather than weight as he rose and tossed the half smoked stogie out through the window. It fell on the manure pile in the centre of the paved court. With a satisfied grunt he sat down again, drew the memo pad to within comfortable reach and, stubby fingers gripping pencil, made a quick choice. There were only two items for this hour's attention—Lt. Rafferty and water supply. Characteristically, he checked the second notation as being a matter more directly affecting the Regiment. Ever since leaving the Point, Hatfield had given first thought to his unit, whether a company of Nebraska Volunteers in the Philippines or a battalion of Regulars on interminable Mexican border service. Now at last he commanded a regiment, and the responsibility did not sit lightly on those massive shoulders.

After twenty minutes the problem of water supply for the 99th Regulars during the ensuing three days' operations was solved. He put the papers to one side.

That Rafferty business! Concentrating on this subtler problem deep furrows creased his brow and gave a sinister cast to the rough chiseled features. Rafferty would undoubtedly ask permission to return to his old company to be with them in the attack. If permission were granted and the fellow should be killed—what then? Irritated, he bit his thick lip and the steel-gray eyes glared hatred as they rested on the brass box at his elbow. There was the letter in its scented purple envelope, the reminder of the sword that hung by a thread over his head. If Rafferty died the woman would tell.

"Hanger" Hatfield pushed back his chair, rose and commenced pacing the length of the little stone room, hands clenched behind his back. At forty-five he was at the height of his physical and mental powers. A habit of arbitrary decision seemed native to this full-blooded commander with square aggressive jaw and strong features. It needed slight effort of imagination to conjecture him imperious, proud, vain and abysmally sentimental—the latter trait women perceived instinctively, yet men seldom suspected it. A pouting lower lip betrayed the sensual cruelty inherent in such natures. The corners of the smooth shaven mouth turned down. Over the broad low brow a straggling lock hung in the Napoleonic manner. Secretly he cherished the resemblance, for the First Consul, like himself a short man, was his hero.

"I'll attach Rafferty to Brigade," he muttered, but instantly rejected the idea. "Hell, no! That fool of a Brigadier might send him up to the line. *She'd* say I manoeuvered it."

The problem was not one to be solved by the usual rapid-fire methods. Scowling, he stood for a moment gazing through the embrasure of the dim cell-like room at the soggy mound, from which spirals of steam rose lazily and vanished in the blazing sunlight. Beyond at the gate of the courtyard the sun glinted on a sentry's bayonet. Hatfield turned and resumed his restless pacing.

On the mouldy wall hung a large scale map of the sector the 99th would shortly occupy. His eye rested on the drawing as it had a hundred times in the last few days—each cryptic red and blue pencil mark the hieroglyph of a language he could understand. A fleeting glimmer of satisfaction passed over his troubled features, for Hatfield, whatever his faults, was first and last a soldier. The Army was his life—the one love to which he would always remain true. Nothing else mattered. No, not even this Rafferty business. Ah, but didn't it matter?

He dropped into his chair. Damn women! Damn them all! No, that was going too far. He couldn't include such girls as the one he had met in Paris last week at the Casino de Paris. What did she call herself? Some fool frog name—Yvonne. She was a good sport. Why couldn't they all play fair like that kid?

Lady

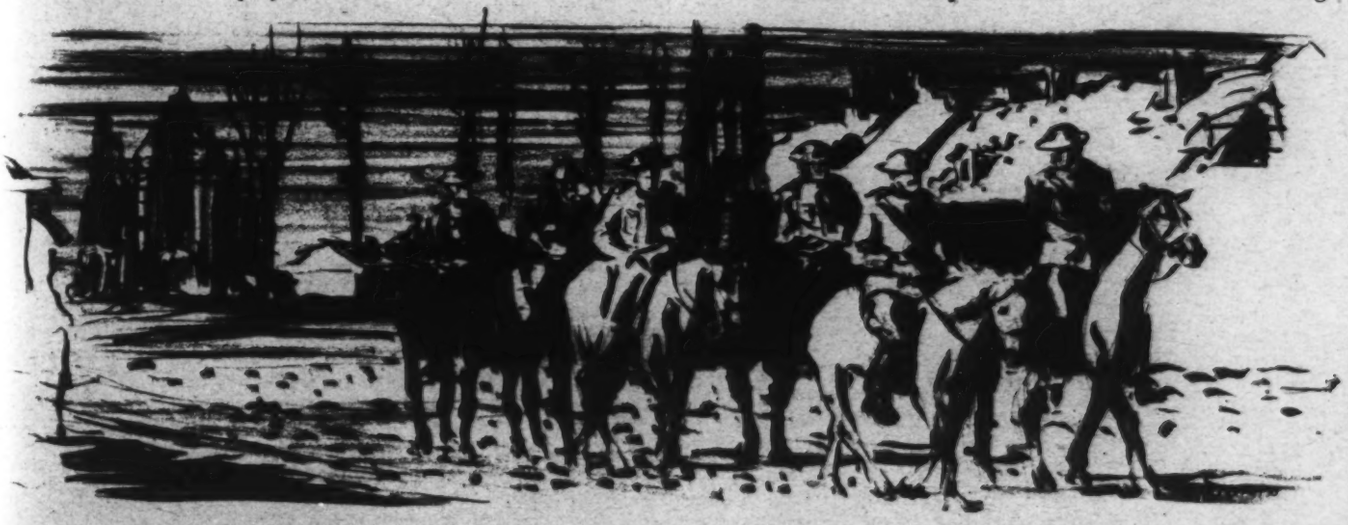
She *Broke* Him and *Made* Him —for Love of Another Man

"You've shot your bolt, Rafferty. If this hadn't happened I'd have commissioned you."

Women had always been his weakness, he reflected bitterly. They had a diabolical way of getting between a man and his work—trying to! Why couldn't they be direct like men, or like his wife? There was a sensible woman—efficient—did what she was told. When he wrote her from the Carolina camp that she was not to join him she didn't complain. She stayed home in Illinois with the children.

"I have dissuaded my officers from bringing on their wives," he had written. "Women in a training camp only make trouble and waste time. I don't want my officers to be thinking of their wives when every thought ought to be given to increasing the efficiency of the Regiment"——a sincere conviction expressed to the subalterns with more force than nicety. The paradox of a Colonel Hatfield championing the celibate life on grounds of efficiency never occurred to him. Nor could he, positive, unimaginative man that he was, comprehend the irony of what followed even as he recalled each step leading to the catastrophe. Like a bolt out of a cloudless sky came this blow to paralyze both his military honor and his masculine pride. All the scenes of the humiliating episode enacted five months ago, back in the States, returned to his consciousness vivid as a play.

A raw, depressing February afternoon in the Carolina uplands. An orderly was fueling the stoves of 99th Infantry Headquarters, an unpainted pine barrack with tar paper roof, partitioned into offices of varying size. As the soldier carried in an armful of kindling from the stack outside the sergeant major's door, a bugler fifty feet away sounded Recall. Colonel Hatfield, seated at the desk in his office, relaxed the stern scrutiny with which he had been favoring



Drawings by Joseph W. Golinkin

Accompanied by the Adjutant and four orderlies, Hatfield posted northward

the prisoner who stood before him. Other bugles in more distant parts of the camp took up the call; then all was silent. The gray eyes hardened and the lower lip curled in a sneer. He leaned forward glowering and struck the desk with broad hairy fist.

"You've shot your bolt, Rafferty. If this hadn't happened I'd have commissioned you. Now you've got the chance of a snowball in hell. My God!" He straightened up, his ruddy face suffused. "Seven years in the ranks without a court-martial and then you go A.W.O.L. when your country's at war. I thought you might amount to something. You were functioning. I had hopes for you, and now you've gone back on your regiment like a damn recruit. Well, if you can't do your duty you *can* do time. Take him to the guard-house!"

He spat the words vindictively as he snatched up a division training schedule which immediately absorbed him.

Two days later the Colonel, just returned from a conference at Division Headquarters, was confronted by a strange apparition as he crossed the threshold of the sergeant major's office through which he must pass to his own. His first impression was of the woman's eyes, tender and reproachful, like those of a deer he once shot — only these were blue verging on violet. The peach bloom complexion, the softness of the mouth, and more particularly her spontaneous manner suggested the candor of childhood, artless, sincere. On second thought he concluded she might be close to thirty. She wore a summer hat, a wide brimmed lace and satin contraption, its crown decorated with a large buckle. For a woman slightly under middle height it might be a trifle too wide. Her white dress, adorned with a large bow at the waist, revealed the graceful lines of a not too slim figure. A white parasol was the final touch to this regalia, better suited to the tropics than a Carolina winter.

STANDING on a knoll he watched the First Battalion clamber out of the trenches almost at his feet.

"Oh, Colonel," she cried tremulously, stepping forward, "I've come from Brooklyn to see about Tom.

"Come in to my office," he said with a sour smile. He held open the door, racking his brain in the endeavor to determine which of his officers would be Tom. A young bride, obviously, and not living on army pay—a background of money somewhere. He placed a chair for her by the desk and relapsed into his own.

"Now, Ma'am," he rumbled benevolently, "tell me what I can do for you."

She was nervously twisting a tiny silk handkerchief. He noted the white smoothness of her hands, the gleam of manicured nails.

"It was all my fault," she appealed.

"I beg your pardon." He was nettled. Vagueness always irritated him. "I didn't catch your name."

"How stupid of me!" She blushed. "I'm Mrs. Rafferty."

The Colonel stared, momentarily taken aback. So this astonishing vision with violet eyes and luscious red lips was the woman for whom Rafferty had overstayed leave—the widow he had married only two weeks before the 99th moved south. Hatfield's face became grim. There was a tightening of the mouth and a slight forward thrust of the square jaw. The metallic glint of his gray eyes must have conveyed an alarming message to her, for even before he spoke she had recoiled a little.

"Do you realize, Mrs. Rafferty, the Sergeant could be shot for desertion?" Technically, he was justified in saying it, though perhaps the manner was unnecessarily severe.

"Oh," she wailed, "you wouldn't!" And then she wept outright, her small body shaken, her face in her hands. What the devil could a man do, torn between his sense of duty and the wish to be kind to a pretty woman, pretty even in tears?

"Come now! You must control yourself. It's not as bad as all that. Brace up."

"You said they'd shoot Tom. Oh, you don't mean it?" she entreated in a choking voice.

"No, no! Of course they won't shoot him," Hatfield snapped. Instead of having a calming effect his curt assurance called forth a still greater paroxysm. The lady was sobbing now, her hand over her mouth. Why couldn't his wife keep her hands as beautifully as this sergeant's wife?

"Please be quiet, Mrs. Rafferty. I can't allow this sort of thing in my office." He glanced uneasily at the door separating him from his staff. What would they think out there, hearing a woman weeping in his office? She was making him ridiculous. It was outrageous and he must put a stop to it. "See here, you've got to be quiet," he blustered.

"I—I feel so dizzy," she gasped in a die-away voice as she opened her bag and fumbled for smelling salts. Hatfield was worried. There flashed through his mind the memory of a slender pale-faced recruit who had fainted when he gave him a "bawling out" because of a dirty mess kit at inspection. Was she going to faint like that boy? Even as the horrid possibility dawned on him the pupils of her dilated eyes rolled uncannily and she slumped in her chair, her head sinking on her breast.

A pretty mess! Though perturbed he acted swiftly. Unlocking a desk drawer he produced a bottle of Scotch whiskey, from which he poured a generous measure into a glass. Holding her head in the hollow of his arm, he poured a little down her throat. There was a spluttering cough. Her eyes opened and fastened on his. They seemed to exert a strange power of fascination on the man who was leaning over her with an arm about her neck. For perhaps three seconds he stood motionless, then, slowly withdrawing his arm, he said in an altered tone:

"Drink a little." Obedient, she gulped, coughed again

and wrinkled her small tip-tilted nose in utter distaste.

"Oh, dear," she murmured contritely, "I'm *so* sorry. Please forgive me."

The apology was quite unnecessary. Hatfield's anger had evaporated in his relief at the woman's quick recovery; and in a feeling of elation whose source, had he but known it, was the subtle flattery of a pretty woman—the tickling of his masculine vanity.

"That's all right. Now don't you worry about your husband," he admonished.

"They won't even let me speak to him," she pouted.

"I'll arrange that for you," he assured her, pleased with his success, as he replaced the bottle in its hiding-place and turned the key. "I'll tell you what I'll do." He sat down again. "Your husband will be let out on parole every day at four, if I have your promise that he's back at six." Hatfield had scarcely made this generous concession before he repented, inwardly cursing himself for a soft hearted fool. A wan smile lit up her face as she shot a grateful glance at him from beneath lowered lashes. Uneasy, he resolved to guard against feminine wiles.

"You are very kind. I don't know how to thank you." She sat erect with hands clasped in her lap, the color mounting to her cheek. In her questioning eyes he fancied an elusive coquetry, a tacit challenge.

"Well," he coughed, "it's irregular, but I'm not going to have you crying your eyes out if I can help it."

Why had he mentioned her eyes? That was a mistake.

"I'm so anxious, so terribly worried about him," she confided impetuously. "Oh, Colonel, do you have to court-martial Tom? I shan't ever forgive myself if he suffers. I made him stay on. It was all my fault."

This time Hatfield's military conscience triumphed. "Can't be helped," he said curtly, avoiding her gaze. "He'll have to go before a court." No hint of indecision in voice or manner now. Disciplinary action had to be taken, he explained, adding reluctantly: "The court-martial will probably impose nothing more than reduction to the ranks."

Thus it happened that every afternoon at four o'clock the prisoner was released from durance. A taxicab waiting at the entrance of the camp whirled him to town. Had any one taken the trouble to investigate, Hatfield suspected a little woman with haunting violet eyes might have been discovered huddled in the shadow of the tonneau. Once when Hatfield drove by unobserved in his official car just as the Sergeant entered the cab, something of rough tenderness in the man's expression confirmed his suspicion.

Several days elapsed before Mrs. Rafferty again appeared at Headquarters, this time suitably clad for the climate in a new tweed suit which detracted not a whit from her feminine charm. She was [*Continued on page 99*]

"Rafferty," the Colonel rumbled, "I shall recommend you for a D. S. C. But don't let it happen again."

SOUL MATES

By EDITH BARNARD DELANO

HE WAS hideously bored with the whole thing. Italy as a vacation tramping-ground might be all well enough; as a possible market for American turbines it somewhat resembled Newcastle in relation to coal. He would not have come at all if Wade had not been so persuasive, nor even then if it had not been for the affair with Madeleine. After all, he was thirty; when a man of that mature age is treated as Madeleine had treated him, it either deals him a solar plexus blow or ruffles him no more than an echo ruffles the grass. As it happened, he was done with women. That was why he had listened to Wade, and why he now found himself alone in Venice in midsummer while Wade was following a lead, as he called it, in Turin. He had another day to put in before Wade rejoined him; there was nothing better to do than sit in the shade on the Piazza and watch the idiotic crowd and the pigeons.

SHE seated herself with a poised deliberateness. "So you don't remember me!" she said. "Is ten years too long?"

Tourists: heavy, vivacious; over-dressed, under-dressed; some bored, some determined on self-improvement; Germans, Americans—what a crowd! Out of them all, as far as he could perceive, not one that he would call human, except that lone, exquisitely dressed woman who had been already seated at the table against the far corner when he ordered his first cool drink. Again and again his look returned to her; after a time a faint smile came to her lips, indenting them at the corners. He could not make out what she was; but she was beautiful in a dark way—Madeleine was blonde—and her eyes showed little crescents of white beneath the iris. Not Italian, he thought. American? He must have been staring; he jumped to his feet when she stood up and came, with a poised deliberateness that was infinitely graceful, to his table.

"How do you do, Mr. Henderson," she said. "I've been wondering when you'd remember me"

He stammered something, then managed to say, "But it's so incredibly splendid to find you here!"

She laughed—and there is no trait more indicative of a woman's nature than her laugh. She seated herself at his table and looked up at him. "So you don't remember me! Is ten years too long? Or have I—improved? Or was I just one of the crowd?"

"Ten years? But I was in college——"

"And to me that June week was so——"

"Of course! Do forgive me! You came——"

She laughed again, shook her head at him. "Oh no! One clue is enough! You're not flattering!"

He sat down opposite her. "You'll have an ice," he said, leaning towards her, "and then——"

She gave him a provocative look. "And then——"

It proved to be a long day.

"But I wanted to see things," she protested. "I stayed over, this time, to——"

It was mid-afternoon when she said that; much water had flowed past their gondola. He bent towards her. "You know why you stayed, and I know," he said, frowning. "Why pretend? This thing was meant to be. We both know that."

She leaned back and looked off at the sky. "I know many things—some that you do not."

"What are names? You are you, I am I—and we've known each other forever."

Their talk was constant and swift—eager, on his part, on hers responsive but tantalizing, always adroitly escaping the pitfalls he laid for the disclosure of her identity. He spoke as casually as he could of one friend and another; never once did she show even a faint gleam of recognition that might give him a clue. She consented to dine with him, but he had to agree to wait for her on the Piazza while she went to her hotel. He had plans for bribing the gondolier; she came back afoot.

Their way to the Lido was along the moon's path. "We've done this before," he said. "Whatever we've done apart just adds up to the sum of us both, but we've done things together since before Cleopatra was born."

Her hand trailed over the side. "I wonder," she murmured.

"No, you don't. You know, as I do. We're not adolescents, to wonder and doubt. The thing has happened,

the great thing. All the greater because we both know it at once."

"It—might happen like that," she admitted.

His hand closed over hers. "It has! Out of all the world—this!"

"My train goes at seven in the morning," she said.

He laughed, kissed her hand. "And I with it! I shall not let you escape me—now or ever! Your life and mine, your soul and mine——"

Again she made him leave her at the Piazza steps. He smiled up at her. "Anyway, it's not your name I want! But I'll know it to-morrow—it'll be on your luggage."

"My train goes at seven," she laughed, and held out her hand to him.

He decided to sit up all night: no Italian hotel would he trust with that call. He packed, wrote a note for Wade. And he thought. This thing to have come to him, this glorious, eternal thing . . . At five he lay down on the bed, his arms under his head . . .

He was awakened by Wade's voice: "Hey, you old dormouse? What's the matter with going to bed right?"

He sat up. In a moment the world came back to him. He leaped to his feet. "My God! What time is it?"

"Time? It's lunch time, that's what!"

Henderson took out his watch and looked at it, sat down on the bed again. Wade stared.

"Say—look here—what's eating you?" he asked.

Henderson was looking at him blankly. Suddenly he leaned forward and put his head on his hands. Wade still stared; then his expression changed.

"I say, old man! You look as if you'd missed a train. You haven't had any bad news, have you?"

"Yes!" Henderson barked. "I wish you'd get out!"

"Oh, all right, all right!" said Wade airily.

Yet when he had gone the world was no more empty to Henderson than it had been before. He felt limp and humiliated. The greatest thing that could ever come to pass had happened to him, and while he had slept—slept like an empty-headed clown, forsooth!—the opportunity of making it his own had passed on. Of course, there had been a lot of fooling in all their talk; but there was no fooling in the things he had sensed in her, the things he wanted to discover, to reveal, to possess. And of course it was incredible that a man should casually, in one short day, find and recognize the one woman. But the incredible does happen. There was only one woman of her sort in all the world; a man might spend his life seeking her . . .

"Hell!" he cried, disgustedly, and presently went down to join Wade on the terrace before the hotel.

And presently Wade seemed to be talking, and the talk seemed to be about turbines. Henderson smoked in silence, letting the sound of Wade's voice affect him as little as the puffing of the small boats marring the canal. Now and again Wade gave him a side glance; at last he asked:

"Don't you think so?"

Henderson grunted, and Wade grinned. "Well, I do, anyway," said he. "I've often noticed it. Of course, there are some that stay gangling; but when they do bloom out they're apt to make quite a pretty show. Not that anybody in the family thought she'd turn out as she did. Matter o' brains, I shouldn't wonder. Makin' the best of herself and all that. And then of course being a widow so young—— Anyway, she's a knock-out——"

"Oh, do shut up," said Henderson wearily.

"Yeah, you talk like that because you can't believe how she's changed. You're still as callow as you were when I had her wished on me for that June week. But I——"

Henderson sat up. "What are you talking about?"

"The same thing I have been talking about for the last half hour," said Wade. "And if I'd gotten here before she left Venice I'd have shown you——"

"*Who* are you talking about?"

"I've told you," said Wade. "Molly. My kid cousin—one we used to call The Colt. And if I'd gotten here before she left——"

"Where is she now?" cried Henderson.

"Say, what's the matter with you? I know my conversation isn't brilliant, but when another fellow's down and you've been trying the best you know how to take his mind off his troubles——"

"Where is she now?" Henderson demanded again.

"Who? Molly? Well, haven't I told you I found a note from her when I got back this morning? If I'd got back before she left I'd have proved to you——"

"Where—is she—now?"

"Say, you're a darned good listener, aren't you? I told you she left this morning before I got here. Aunt Mary's waiting for her at the Grand Hotel at Como—Say! Where you going?"

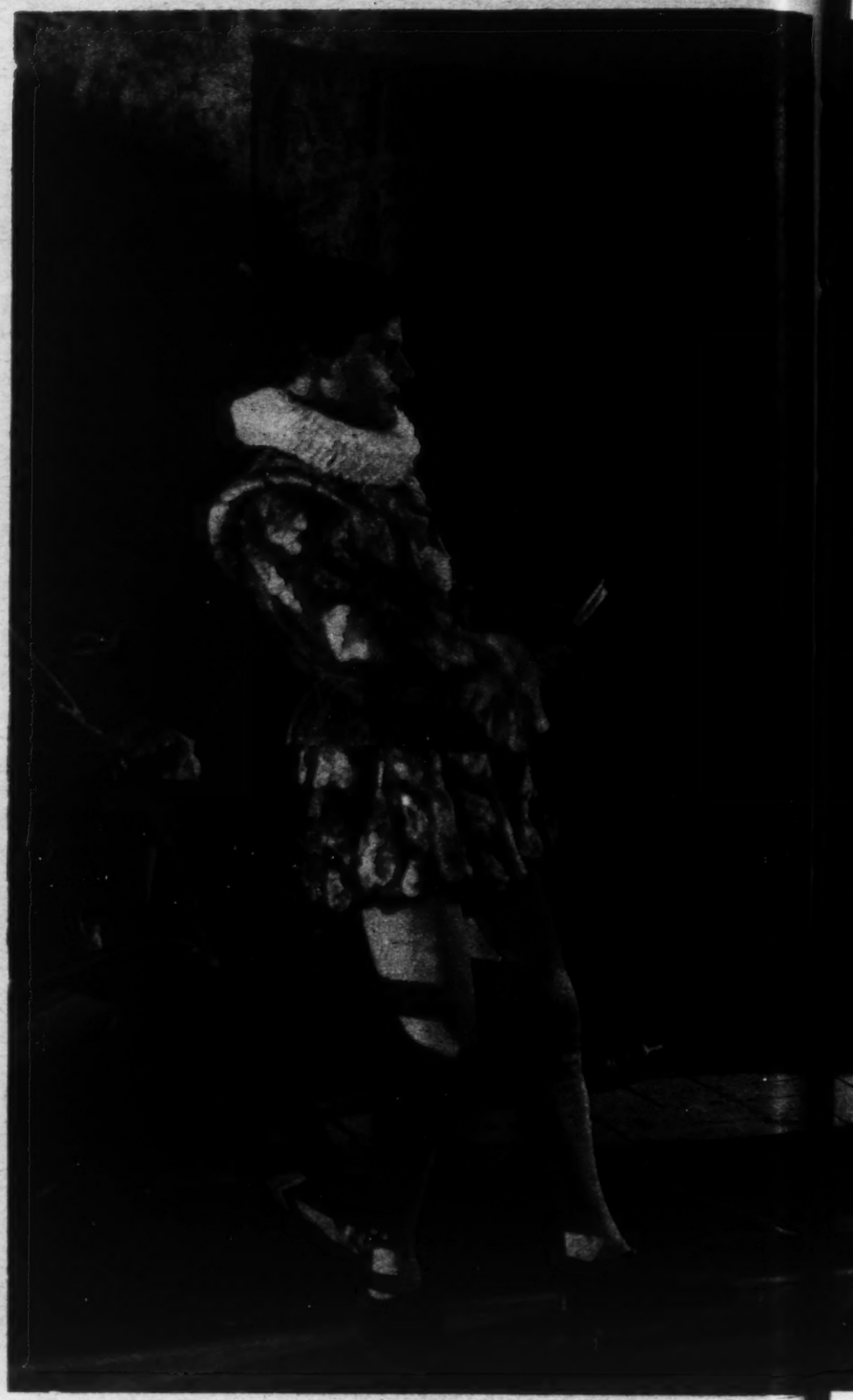
"Good-bye," said Henderson. "I'm on my way!"

Drawing by Eldon Kelley

Emeralds and Gold Dust

By

HELEN VASILOS



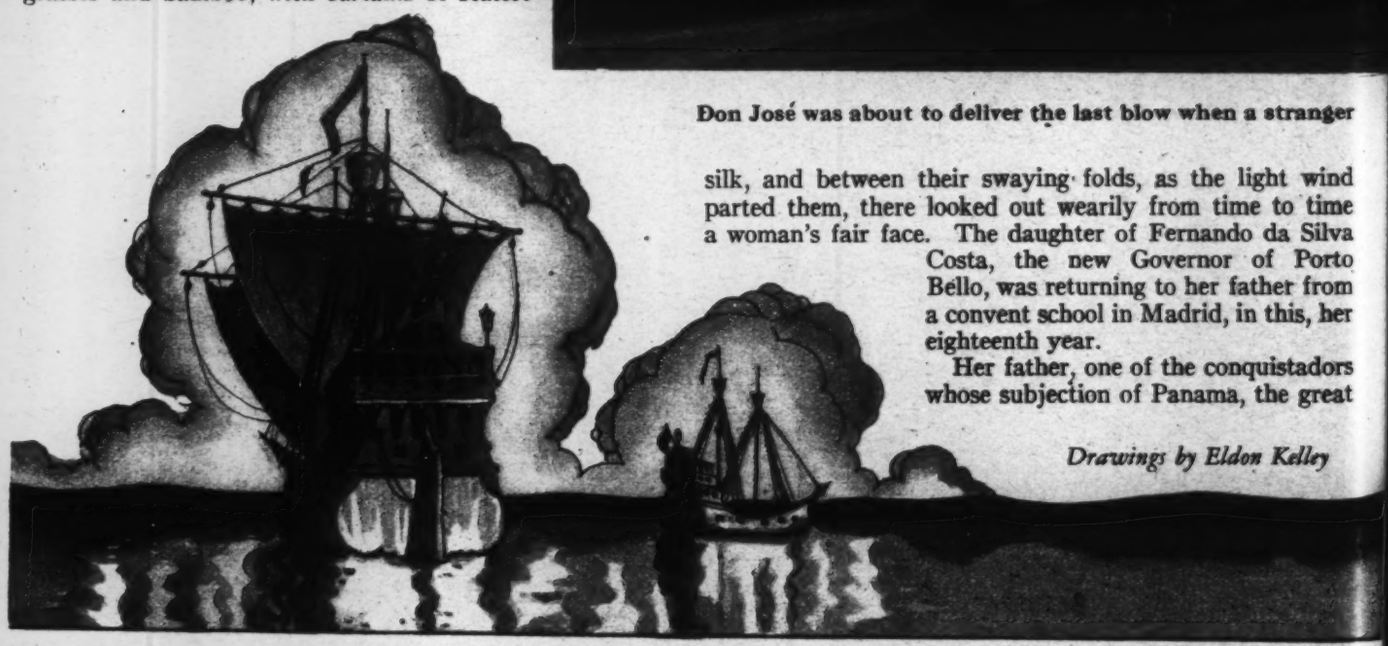
Don José was about to deliver the last blow when a stranger

TO PORTO BELLO, along the rough-paved road that led up from Panama through the jungle, there came on a hot still day of tropic sunshine a long mule-train laden with treasure. At the head of the caravan marched, three abreast, Spanish soldiers, their armor and their tall lances glistening; and in the rear came more soldiers prodding forward the slaves they guarded.

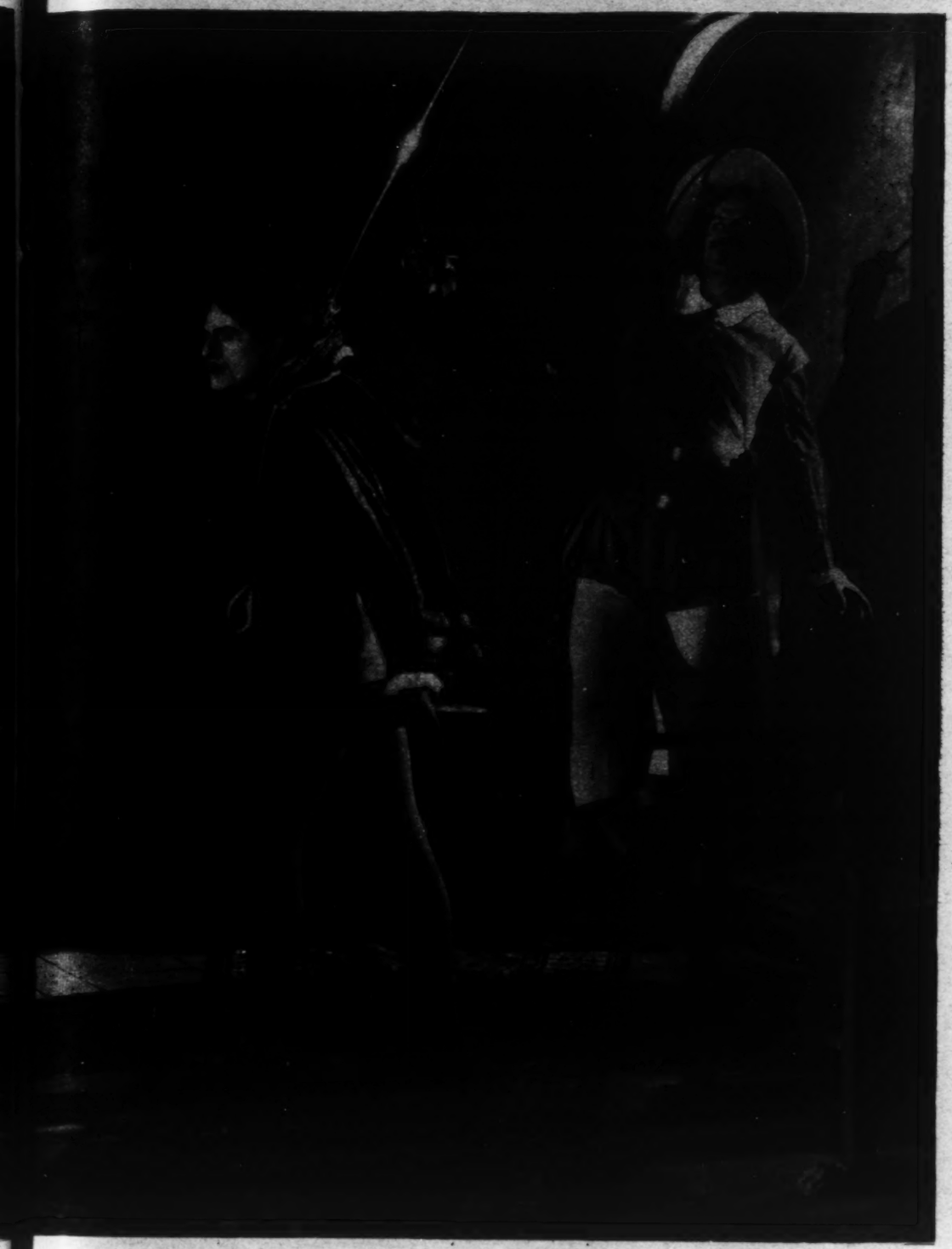
Among these slaves there was one white man, an Englishman, who though the march had been long and torturous yet walked with free step and head erect. His hands, bound behind him, were cruelly chafed, his gray eyes were fearless and from his closed lips the whips and lances of the guards wrung no cry. About him the black slaves and the brown Mayas drooped and sickened, but the young Englishman was still high-hearted.

Near the middle of the pack-train was borne a closely guarded litter of woven sweet grasses and bamboo, with curtains of scarlet silk, and between their swaying folds, as the light wind parted them, there looked out wearily from time to time a woman's fair face. The daughter of Fernando da Silva Costa, the new Governor of Porto Bello, was returning to her father from a convent school in Madrid, in this, her eighteenth year.

Her father, one of the conquistadors whose subjection of Panama, the great



Drawings by Eldon Kelley



leaped from the doorway and struck up the descending steel.

A Story
based on
Historical FACTS

How a Certain Nobleman in League with HENRY MORGAN —Pirate— Falls Captive to a Spanish Mistress

Castillo de Oro of the New World, had led to his appointment as Governor, had sent for her; and the motherless girl, lifted suddenly from the cloistered existence of the convent, saw life open vividly, dazzingly before her.

Friends of the new Governor in Panama had fêted her, for besides her high station, Estrella da Silva Costa was very fair. Her Castilian blood showed in the softness of her lustrous dark hair, her pallid skin, her deep-shadowed eyes. Evanescent and delicate, the frailty in her was apparent now in the weariness that the long journey had brought to her face. Only when her gaze fell on the Englishman who walked among the chained slaves was there a quickening of interest in her glance.

As the caravan moved on she studied him, studied his clear eyes, and firm mouth; and once her look encountered his, crossed it like a sword, and held it for the space of a breath.

It was then that Estrella raised to the edge of her lips the fan of ostrich feathers in her hand and turned to the elderly woman who rode with her in the litter.

"Find out for me," she said, "the name of the Englishman who walks among the slaves, and whether he will be sold with the others. It is just possible my father may wish to buy him."

Edward Kingston, one-time baronet of England, looked often at the litter but was careful not to let his glance again cross that of the girl who rode within. Yet he knew that her eyes dwelt often upon him.

As the mule-train wound its way between the giant ferns, the impenetrable green network of the jungle, his

mind which had been busy with plans of escape was held with the realization that escape would mean separation from this Spanish girl—this girl of an enemy race. An impatient sigh escaped his lips, and he heard what seemed its echo near him.

Turning his head cautiously, Kingston saw an Inca whom he had noticed earlier in the journey, attracted by something in his bearing which differentiated him from the other Indians whose manner toward him was subtly humble. He met the Inca's dark eyes fixed upon him in desperate appeal, and realized that the man was half fainting and about to fall.

ONE of the Spanish guards, perceiving the slave's condition, prodded him brutally onward with his lance, and as the Indian stumbled and fell to his knees, rained a shower of blows upon his head. With an oath Kingston sprang forward and thrust with his shoulder against the soldier's chest, sending him sprawling. Instantly a half dozen guards were upon the Englishman, and the leader of the train was hurrying to the spot with drawn sword. He stepped back as the girl Estrella flashed before him.

"Leave these two men in peace!" she cried. "I claim the authority of my father, the Governor. This brutality offends me. The man is sick. Let him be attended."

She turned away on the words and went back to her litter.

A little later the caravan stopped for the night, and Kingston, who had been supporting the young Inca as well as he could, now assisted him to stretch himself upon the ground. Presently a guard brought food and a jug of wine, and the men's bonds were loosened. Kingston knew whence came these favors, and a gentle look crept into his eyes.

The humming silence of dusk enveloped them. Near at hand a camp-fire burned in dancing scarlet and flame; distantly sounded the sudden tinkle of mule-bells as one of the pack animals shook himself. A night bird called with a drowsy note.

Kingston felt the Inca's hand upon his arm, and bent over him.

"Galaya thanks you—" The Indian spoke a little Spanish, and Kingston more than a little. He pressed the man's hot hand with a comrade's touch.

"You have not the endurance in hardship of the Indian," he said softly. "You are not like the others."

The Inca sighed again.

"I am of the royal house of Montezuma," he said faintly. "Among my own people I am a prince."

Kingston pressed his hand yet closer with sympathy as he thought of the stately gray castle in England where he had passed his boyhood.

While the Inca slept the heavy sleep of complete exhaustion, Kingston sat wakeful, staring with drawn brows into that impenetrable jungle which lay between him and freedom. He had lived for freedom up till now. But since his glimpse of the dark, lustrous eyes and gentle face of the fair Spanish girl, the contemplation of liberty had lost its savor.

In the market-place of Porto Bello a great crowd had gathered to witness the sale of slaves recently brought in with the mule-train from Panama. Among the spectators, a little apart from the press, appeared a slender dark man riding a black horse, and a lady. Her dusky hair contrasted wtih her skin of ivory pallor, and the man on the black horse bent deferentially toward her as they drew rein on the outskirts of the crowd. A waiting-woman and two men-at-arms followed them.

"Don José, never have I looked upon the like," said the girl, gazing about her with startled eyes, an unaccustomed fleck of red in her pale cheeks. "Indians treated as cattle, and among them a white man about to be sold into slavery. In truth, behind convent walls life is a dream. I am frightened at what I see—Don José."

Don José Carnerio was a Spanish adventurer, whose gold, plundered from the Incas, flowed like water through his wastrel fingers. His laugh now was half contemptuous, half caressing; and he turned his bold glance on the girl, coveting her, as he answered:

"The Indians *are* cattle, *Señorita*. And as for the white man—he is English, and fit only for slavery. I think that I shall buy this Englishman, and give him a taste of our Spanish—hospitality."

The girl's eyes flew to his face, wide, dark, terrified. The thread of scarlet that was her lips grew ashen, and her slender hand tightened on the bridle-rein so that her horse started suddenly, almost unseating her.

It was at this moment that a withered old Cadiz merchant appeared beside them, his wild gesticulations increasing the confusion of the scene.

"Don José!" he shrilled. "Who in Porto

"I AM of the royal house of Montezuma," the Indian slave said, sighing. "Among my own people—a prince!"

Bello knows beautiful things as Don José knows them! Look *señor*, look!"

He held up a silken bundle he was carrying; but Don José turned on him with uplifted riding whip.

"Be off! See you not that you have frightened the *señorita's* horse, dog that you are! Be off!"

But the man was not to be discouraged. He continued to vociferate, the motions of his head shaking the great gold hoops in his ears; and his claw-like hands tore the bundle apart, and drew forth, like a gorgeous butterfly from a dark cocoon, a gleaming, shining, incredible thing, which he held up triumphantly. A cloak made of the jewel-like breasts of humming-birds! So ample that it could drape the shoulders of an emperor, so fine, so silken-soft that it could be drawn through the span of a woman's ring. In the sunlight it blazed with a thousand fires. Like an incomparable opal it held the gleam of every jewel in its colors; and as though this splendor were not enough, the clasp that fastened it glittered with a single great diamond.

With a sharp exclamation Don José stretched forth an eager hand to the lovely garment, but the merchant drew it back sharply and hid it again beneath its dark wrappings, his wrinkled face a mask of greed and craft.

"The mántle of Montezuma!" he whispered enticingly. "A rare gift"—he threw a leering glance at the girl—"for a woman's white shoulders. But not for barter in the marketplace, Don José. I go to your house to await your pleasure.

He slipped back into the crowd and was lost in an instant in the throng that surged in around the horses. The slave sale was about to begin.

Indians and Africans mingled together in the herd of slaves for auction. One by one they were brought forward and knocked down to Spanish masters. The girl sat tense as the young Inca on whose behalf she had interfered the day before was led to the auction block, and the bidding began. It was with a sharp release of breath that she heard the voice of her father's steward among the other voices. The Indian was sold to her father.

After what seemed an interminable wait a threatening mutter through the plaza, increasing to a steady menacing murmur, heralded the appearance of the Englishman. He stood above the crowd, bare-headed in the sun. Don José spurred forward.

From the first it was evident that Don José intended to buy; and because of his wealth and his friendship with the Governor only a few dared bid against him. He outbid them quickly, and the auctioneer was about to conclude the sale when a woman's voice was

"YOU shall have the Englishman, if you savor your woman's vengeance."

As if he longed to touch a forbidden thing, he held out his hand to her.

And, indeed, she was of a tempting loveliness — this Spanish *señorita*.

heard from the rear. The governor's daughter urged her horse through the throng, and ranged it beside the huge black. As if to taunt the Don, she named a sum far in excess of his. For a moment Don José was amused. He acknowledged the challenge with a gleam of white teeth. But as unfalteringly she capped his every bid with a larger, his attitude changed.

"*Señorita*, the jest has gone far enough. The man is mine!" As he spoke he threw a small sack of gold-dust upon the platform.

Estrella's eyes held his for a frightened moment; but the tension ended with her triumphant laughter. She lifted from about her neck a chain of emeralds worth a ransom.

"Nay, mine, Don José," she cried, her voice high with excitement. "My father's court threatens to be dull. I have a mind to entertain this English guest of yours."

"MY CHILD, did you learn such rashness in the convents of Madrid?" The governor laid a hand on his daughter's dark hair, and tilting it back looked into her eyes. "The young Inca, Galaya, whom you wished as a slave I have bought for you as you desired. But the Englishman is another and very different matter."

Estrella's head slipped quickly from under his hand, and her lashes veiled her eyes as she looked up at him.

"Don José is crude," she answered with a little brittle laugh. "There are other torments beside the rack and the thumbscrew. This Englishman is proud, he has been a gentleman. How think you he will pass his days—a slave in the household of a Spanish woman!" Again she laughed a tinkling laugh that held no mirth. "Humiliation such as that, methinks, will bear more heavily upon his haughty spirit than all Don José's cruelties."

Don Fernando looked at her curiously.

"Strange, how the blood of the Silva Costas runs hot even in a thing so fair and delicate," he said musingly, stroking his short and pointed gray beard.

He moved away, and stood looking over the balustrade of the terrace toward the harbor. The gay sunlight gilded his lean hawk face, and enriched the dark velvet of his dress. But his expression was meditative, and his eyes did not see the lovely scene of emerald slopes, of silver beach, of turquoise bay. Estrella watched him with caught breath—a quickened pulse beating in her white throat.

Don Fernando turned at [*Continued on page 107*]

The Blue Pigeon

By Rice Gaither

A Long-standing Debt of Hate goes Uncollected, and a Little One is Paid in Full

IN THE first place I must make it clear that I never saw Ballard, never heard of him, until that afternoon at La Plage d'Hyères. He was standing on the pebbly beach, putting pistol balls through crockery plates tossed by his chauffeur, when I came out of the black umbrella wood. He smiled at me and nodded pleasantly, and out of courtesy I said:

"I shouldn't like to be your adversary," as his pistol cracked again, and another plate splintered in mid-air.

The train from Les Salins whistled, and I started for the station.

"Going toward Nice?" he called. And, when I answered that Nice was my destination, he waved an arm in the direction of a big motor-car on top of the embankment. "I'm going there," he declared, "and I should be most happy to have your company."

I was not particularly attracted toward Ballard, though he was certainly affable, ingratiating—I should almost say fascinating if I thought that wouldn't give you the wrong idea of him. He was a big, upstanding man in tweeds, the sort of man who can wear a cloth cap and those boxy knickers without losing his godship. Closely shaven, a heavy beard darkened his cheek and moulded chin. And, when his up-carried arm tightened the loose coat about his waist, one fancied the muscles rippling under his vest.

"That's very kind of you," I said, and we were soon speeding across the marshes toward the mountains of the Moors.

We had, I remember, a delightful drive along the rock-bound coast with the valleys all purple in the evening, the sea red in the sun, and the lights of Cannes like a fallen veil of stars when dusk came. Of course we talked about New York, as New Yorkers will when they are far from home. We discovered that each of us knew this man and that, and that separately we had each had the same host. The host happened not to be one of my enthusiasms. But in Ballard's mind he proved to be a common bond, and when Ballard set me down in front of my hotel at Nice, he said:

"How would you like to come up to my villa to-morrow evening and spend the week-end with us?"

I hesitated. But he persuaded me. He said his wife, who had just got back from Paris, would be very glad to see somebody from home.

Furthermore, he said, they were going to drive over to Monte Carlo to meet two of her friends arriving on a boat.

HE HAD pierced the four hearts in the four corners. "You see it is an ace," he said.

"It will be a nice party," Ballard urged insistently.

And, having no other plan, I accepted.

But I forgot all about Ballard when, inside my hotel, the concierge met me with an apologetic putting together of his fingers.

"A gentleman arrived to see you, sir. He's waiting in your room."

Harry Keynes was sitting by the window when I pushed open my door.

"HARRY, you wretch, why didn't you tell me you were coming?"

"I didn't know," he answered curiously, without getting up. "You're glad to see me, aren't you?"

Of course I was glad to see him, even if he did seem a little gloomy about something. I was glad to see him for himself, and, indeed, I was not sorry to be able to telephone Ballard next morning to cancel that somewhat impulsive engagement.

"Oh, bring him along," said Ballard hospitably. "We need another man for the party, anyway."

Again I accepted—I don't know why unless it was simply that the man wouldn't take refusal—and went back to tell Harry about it. Harry seemed quite indifferent.

"Our host will send a car for us at six," I told him.

"Oh, all right," he answered, without even asking the name of the man we were going to visit. "What are we going to do to kill time between now and four o'clock?"

"And what, for heaven's sake, are we going to do at four?"

He flushed. I was sure even then that he flushed.

"I—er—doesn't one go to the Casino?"

"Why don't you get your racket and let's have a game?"

"Oh, tennis," he said deprecatingly and looked at his watch.

I can't really tell you what we did do. It seemed to me that he wouldn't even talk. I tried to get him to tell me something about his stay in Paris. But he evaded me. He said it was cold in Paris and foggy.

"It must be lunch time," he said when it was still quite early.

I thought perhaps food might interest him. But he ate only some olives and one of those pickled artichokes—you know.

Along toward three-fifteen—after much rubbing of his watch crystal—he spoke of a terrible thirst.

"Think I'll stroll out and get a drink," he said restlessly.

I know now that he was trying to get rid of me. But I didn't know then.

I said: "I'll go with you."

And at half-past three we were sitting at a table in the Casino.

It was, of course, too soon for tea, and though the stalls in the theater were sprinkled with dull people, the building seemed singularly empty. Harry ordered drinks for us, took a few sips from his glass, lighted a cigarette, crushed it out in his saucer, then lighted another one. He looked often at his watch and oftener at the doorway.

We waited in that fashion until the place had livened up considerably. The curtain had gone down on the stage, the orchestra had moved over among the drink tables, and two or three couples had begun to dance. Then Harry got up suddenly.

"You don't mind, old chap," he said, darting off in the direction of the doorway.

And when I saw him next he was in the cleared rectangle of the dancing floor. He had a

HAVING said good-by forever, they were fortuitously met again two hours later.

"You cheat!" I thought I heard Harry say.

woman in his arms—a girl, rather. She was really no more than a girl.

Of course that explained most things. It explained why Harry had shown up unexpectedly in Nice. It explained his preoccupation. But I think I was a little piqued at his want of confidence in me. Why couldn't he tell me about the girl—if he was in love with her? And why should Harry look so deucedly unhappy about the whole affair?

She was a pretty girl, a slender thing of rounded curves and bright hair curled close to her small head. She looked altogether as if she belonged in Harry's arms. I watched them till the dance was over. I saw them sit down together at a distant table. I waited for Harry's signal. But he didn't glance in my direction. And when the music recommenced, he took her in his arms again. He had eyes for no one else.

They danced three times, I think. Then Harry took her coat from the back of her chair and put it on her. He led her to the door and came back to me alone.

"You don't mind, old chap," he murmured without bothering to change the formula. Then: "You know it's the last time I am going to see her."

We went back to our hotel and dressed. Ballard's car came and took us to his villa. It must have been seven o'clock when, from my seat in Ballard's drawing-room, I saw a girl with yellow hair divide the green curtains to come into us.

"Ah, my wife," said Ballard, rising.

She went quite pale on seeing Harry. For an instant she stopped on the threshhold of the room. But as Ballard spoke our names she came forward and gave each of us a hand.

"How nice of you," she said impartially. "There hasn't been a soul in Nice."

Harry Keynes was in love with another man's wife. She was in love with him. And, having said good-by forever, they were fortuitously met again two hours later in the house of her husband.

Melodrama? Well, I can't say it struck me as being melodrama. I thought it a little unfortunate. And it certainly seemed foolish to me that Harry and Mrs. Ballard should pretend never to have seen each other before. Such pretenses have always to break down sooner or later; and I felt that Ballard, when he learned sometime that they had been playing around together in Paris, would have the right to be both angry and suspicious. I didn't like, somehow, to think of Ballard angry and suspicious.

But Ballard was a most genial host. It seemed to me that he was particularly attentive and polite to Harry—talked to him a great deal; got up once while the butler was out to fill his glass; acted, indeed, as if Harry and

BALLARD stayed there killing pigeons until I began to hate him.

not I were the "inspiration" of the party that evening.

There was nothing obtrusive about all this, you understand; and I don't know how to tell you without exaggerating that once or twice, while Ballard was talking to me or to his wife, he looked at Harry in a peculiar sort of way. His eyes had a screwed-up look, like the eyes of a man trying visually to shape something.

After dinner I saw that fleeting look again. We were gathered about the bridge table—we hadn't sat down—when Harry said:

"You play cards very well, don't you, Mr. Ballard?"

It was that trying-to-see look, even more momentary.

Ballard said: "Shall we cut for deal?" and altogether ignored the question.

Ballard did play a clever game. He "made" surprising bids at extraordinary odds. There was something deft about his very handling of the cards. He won, and the evening passed quickly and easily. When shortly before midnight the party broke up and started for bed, I felt that the most difficult fraction of the hours we had agreed to spend in Ballard's company was safely passed.

I knew, of course, that the accident of my bringing Harry to Ballard's house was not a happy one. I knew it was painful for him to see the woman he loved in the company of her husband. I knew that really he ought never to have seen her again.

But in the clear morning it was impossible to take a very serious view of the situation. When I stepped through my window onto the wide terrace, I saw a glittering sea rise slanting to meet a curved and enameled sky.

Harry stood beside a little fountain in front of a yellow wall and morosely watched a jeweled spray.

"I say, old man," he answered my morning greeting, "have you ever been a coward?"

I supposed, naturally enough, that he was referring in some way to the part he was playing in Ballard's house. So I was relieved when he started talking about something that had happened a long time ago, an adventure of his boyhood which had come to him in northern Mexico.

It was a queer thing for him to be telling me, queer, too, that he should be emotional about it. He described a long room, garish with yellow light and reeking with smoke; quite an ordinary sort of frontier gambling room, I suppose, with a bar at one end and rows of rough tables. It was full of people—men, the usual sort of women. And at one of the tables sat a boy. The boy was nineteen, and he shouldn't have been there, because his father—a New Yorker interested in Mexican mining properties—had left him safe in quite an orderly hotel elsewhere while he, himself, went off to visit a mine. But time had grown heavy on the boy's hands; he had a pocketful of money and a vague idea that somewhere toward the north—up near the California line—there was a dazzling city of delight. The city when he got there was quite different from what he had expected. It was hot and foul. It frightened him. But he was ashamed of fear—this young boy—Harry told me. He stayed.

Drawings by Charles Sarka

"Ah, the flood-light," said Ballard, "for our amateur theatricals."

Across the table from the boy sat a man twice the boy's age, and it was about a thing the man did to the boy that Harry was trying to tell me. But it all seemed so remote in time and space and, most of all, in significance that I found myself listening with difficulty.

The boy had lost his money to the man—quite a good deal, it seemed—and was pushing his chair back from the table to go away. But, when he stooped to pick up his hat off the floor, he saw a card that lay face upward almost between the man's feet. He looked back at the table where the man's hand still lay exposed—the ace and four fives—and then back at the card on the floor. It was the five of hearts. His head swam as he retrieved it. Words sprang to his lips as he took it between his thumb and forefinger and laid it on the table in front of the man.

"You cheat!" he wanted to say. But there was a pistol lying on the table in front of the man. A moment before it hadn't been there. And, at the sight of the pistol and of the smile on the face of the man, a nauseating terror seized him.

"What is that card?" asked the man.

The boy stammered—he couldn't even say it was the five of hearts. He shrank back when the man rose from the table. He expected death, perhaps. But the man only looked quizzically at the card. He took it and pinned it against the wall. Then he stepped ten paces off and shot. He pierced the four hearts at the four corners with four bullets delivered at ten paces. He took the card from the wall and offered it to the boy.

"You were mistaken, weren't you? You see it's an ace."

Then, through a dissolving rim of faces, the boy found the black rectangle of an open door which let him into the starry night.

"You understand?" said Harry. "I was afraid. Afraid of him."

Outside the terraced court a motor horned. A long car glided in front of the grille gate, and Ballard, alighting, called to us:

"Are you all ready for the Grande Corniche?"

I can't say I knew then that Ballard was the man out of the Mexican gambling hell. But I know I had a sudden feeling against him. There was something a little too suave about him, a little too affable. And that feeling hardened when I saw him standing beside Nina Ballard who came out a moment later. She was so young. And Ballard—well, he must have been forty or forty-five—only that isn't what I mean. Beneath that smile of his he was all ice. I was sorry for the girl. And most of all I was sorry for Harry, devouring her with his eyes.

But, as I have told you, it was a glorious morning, and the sun warmed us as we left the house and went speeding toward Monte Carlo. The car crossed the shallow river and climbed the olive slopes of Mont Gros. You know how the road there winds higher and higher until the whole valley of the Paillon spreads below, and how the bald top of Mont Chauve catches the morning sun,

and the villages gleam white, and the sea slants up to meet the impossibly blue sky. The miles sped by until we reached the vicinity of La Turbie. Then, just short of the broken and despoiled column of Augustus, the chauffeur stopped the car and said he'd have to change a tire.

We all got out to stretch our legs.

"I've got a brace of pistols there in that box," said Ballard pointing to the running-board. "Like to try a shot?"

He spoke to all of us, but it was Harry—Harry, of course—who answered.

"You shoot very well, don't you, Mr. Ballard?"

Ballard didn't seem to hear. He was searching his pockets.

"Has anybody a cigaret?" he asked, and when nobody had, excused himself and trotted off toward the village.

Harry took one of the pistols and loaded it. He drove his cane into the hard ground. He put a pebble on the flat knob of it, stood ten paces back, and shot the pebble off.

"Oh, do we have to shoot?" asked Nina Ballard.

Harry looked at her and put the pistol back into its box.

I said: "How long did it take you to learn that trick?"

"I'm twenty-nine," he answered. "It must have been ten years."

We were ready to start when Ballard got back. I saw by the clock in the front of the car that it was already noon. The boat was due at three. By four I hoped to have Harry on the train with me, going back to Nice. I was glad the time was already well spent. For I knew then, as plainly as if Harry had told me, who Ballard was.

"I wonder if the boat will be on time," said Nina Ballard.

It wasn't. We found a bulletin in our hotel down at Monte Carlo which said it had been delayed several hours in getting out of Marseilles—it was one of those world cruise things, you know—and that it wouldn't arrive till after dark.

"Well, what shall we do?" asked Ballard amiably. "Luncheon here, of course. And then—Mentone? Or shall we stay here and waste our substance at the gaming-table?"

"Oh," said Nina Ballard, "let's stay here and feed the pigeons."

Ballard laughed—I didn't like his laugh.

"You're a child, Nina," he said.

I thought at the time he was denying her. But it was Ballard's style to be thoughtful and ingratiating. He said we'd stay at Monte Carlo. And after luncheon, when we were having our coffee on the terrace of the Café de Paris, he flung a ten-franc note to the waiter.

"I want a bag of grain," he ordered.

I was a little confused about him when he took the bag and followed his wife into the open square. But I was thinking more of Harry than of Ballard. Harry's eyes rested hungrily upon the stooping girl, about whom swirled and fluttered a crowd of pigeons, lured down from Moorish cornices to feed at her feet.

"Harry," I said, now that I had him alone for a moment, "do you know you're dealing with a dangerous man?"

"A man who frightens boys," he answered. And, when I tried to give him my own opinion of Ballard, he lashed out angrily: "Well, what do you want me to do?"

"I want you"—I spoke as easily as I could—"to get on the first train with me. You told me yesterday that you never meant to see his wife again."

He shrugged. "Oh, yesterday," he said, as if yesterday were a thousand years ago, "I didn't know who her husband was."

But, after all, he couldn't stay forever. It was already four o'clock. By eight at the latest we should be quit of the man's hospitality. Such, at least, was the conclusion I had reached when Ballard came back to our table. He was alone. His wife stood in the square with a pigeon on her wrist.

"They've got a shooting arrangement down under the cliff," said Ballard. "Should you like to try a shot?"

He put the question to both of us, impartially.

Harry said: "They shoot live pigeons, don't they?"

"Yes."

"I don't."

It was as quick as that. But I saw the eyes of the two men meet for an instant in hostility. Then Harry turned. I saw him picking his way among the tables toward Mrs. Ballard. I saw the pigeon fly off her wrist at his approach and then settle confidently back again.

"I'll go with you, Ballard," I said, and together we went toward the pits.

I knew when we got there what Harry meant, for I found it a very cruel sport—or no sport at all.

Perhaps you know about the mechanism. I don't. But I do know that along the greensward in front of the stand there is a series of trap-doors. Every now and then one of them opens and a pigeon flies out.

He flies out of the dark prison underground into the bright afternoon. He sees the wide blue of heaven. He goes soaring toward freedom. Then there is a shot. Perhaps the pigeon doesn't hear the shot. He falls. A small fox-terrier trots out and brings the body in.

Ballard stayed there killing pigeons until I began to hate him. He had a crowd about him, of course, for he never missed. He was quite vain of his shooting. But, somehow, I fancied his taking a special delight in the murder of it. Once or twice I opened my lips to beg him to go away. But where should we go? Back there to the higher terrace where Harry waited with Ballard's wife?

THERE was, I observed, a certain blue pigeon which kept circling high above the traps. I showed it to the man who loaded Ballard's gun for him.

"That's odd," said the man. "They usually keep away when there's shooting going on. Maybe we've got his mate shut up here in the traps."

I don't know about that—I know nothing about pigeons. But I do know it was rather heart-breaking to me to watch that bird spiral down whenever the traps opened, as if he had come to see who died. And I think he affected Ballard, in a different way. Once or twice I saw Ballard following him with his eye along the gun-barrel. But the pigeon came within range only once. That was the time he moaned—oh, yes, I can swear to the moan—and one of the men in the crowd said to Ballard: "I believe you've killed his mate."

Ballard laughed.

"If he comes that close again, I'll get him, too."

The blue pigeon didn't come back any more. He made a wide circle out over the water and flew back toward the Moorish cornices of the Casino.

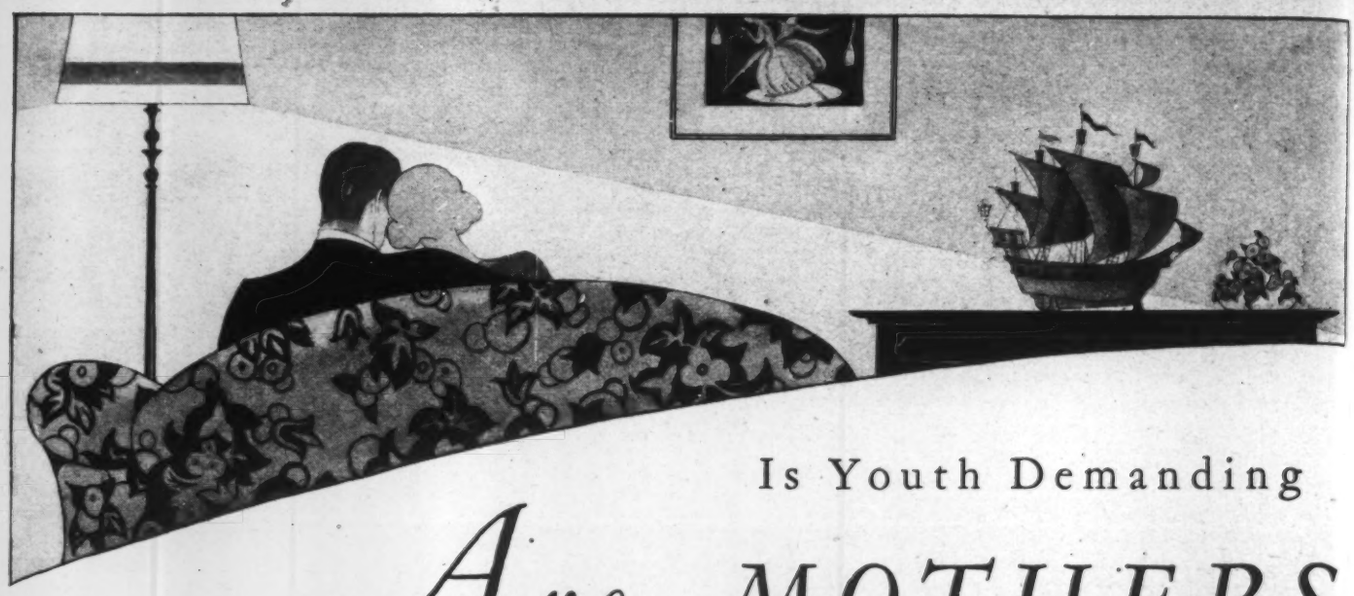
It was dusk when Ballard and I got back upon the heights. Porters in the uniform [*Continued on page 127*]

E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM

—unrivaled teller of swift-moving stories—has written a hair-raising mystery of a lone traveler who spends a night in an eerie house on the moors.

In the August McCLURE'S

The Two Spinsters



Is Youth Demanding *Are* MOTHERS *By* The Love

By Mrs. M.

Dear Left-Out Girl:

To begin with I am not one of the "most people" who, you are convinced, would tell you that you "ought to be happy." It is only twenty years since I, too, was a left-out girl and I have not forgotten how I felt. All the years of my 'teens I was gauche, shy, badly dressed, frankly ignored by boys. My social handicaps were unlike yours, but the result in terms of suffering was much the same. I longed vainly to dance and flirt and have good times. I wondered morbidly why I was so different from other girls, why nobody cared for me. I, too, saw stretching ahead of me a gray and loveless life.

In that fine new novel, "Teeftallow," T. S. Stribling utters a tragic truth: "The woes of eighteen are absolute; untempered by philosophy, unsoftened by comparison. They are the worst that can ever befall any human being."

We never know in our 'teens—you don't, I didn't—how much happiness lies ahead! But neither you nor any other youngster ought to endure present unhappiness that can be avoided. To help you is the more keenly my desire because nobody helped me.

First of all you are at least nine-tenths right in your attitude toward boys. Yours are the true standards of behavior. The trouble is that the boys have been allowed to set up their standards, instead of conforming to those set by the girls—and by their mothers. It is the latter whom I hold primarily responsible for social slacking.

Women in every age have wielded the civilizing influence upon manners. The amenities of all relationships between the sexes have lain in the hands of women. They have cultivated and demanded such graces as modesty, self-control, dignity, courtesy. One may seriously doubt whether men would ever have lifted courtship above the cave technique.

Many a boy of today with his pocket-flask petting parties reverts as closely to that technique as he can. The silly little good-times-hungry girl goes all the way with him, instead of making him come to her. *As she can*—if she and her mother and other girls and their mothers will stand together. For all social life, especially of a small town, such as yours, is directed by the feminine half of the population.

You alone can work no social revolution—but you are not alone. You admit that several of your friends share your feelings. Let me tel you how a similar group acted in the community where I live.

Each girl of a half-dozen [*Continued on page 126*]

TWO authorities in sociological common sense—a woman and a man of standing in their professions—have been commissioned by McClure's to study each month a single problem selected from those submitted by readers. These experts are unknown to each other, so that the woman's side of the question will be contrasted genuinely with the man's. As evidence of good faith, all letters sent to McClure's, 119 West 40th Street, New York, must bear the writer's name and address. Under no circumstances, however, will names be disclosed, even to the two principals.

DEAR MADAM AND SIR:

Since my graduation from high school I have been living at home in the small town where I grew up. I am nineteen years old and an only child; and as my father is a doctor and away from home a good deal, my mother likes to keep me with her. We are not rich but there is no financial necessity for my going to work, and I have no special talent to express by means of a career.

Most people would say that I ought to be a happy girl, with a good home, devoted parents, health, and the fair share of good looks my mirror tells me I possess. The trouble is that I am not popular with young men. I am a good dancer. I love tennis and sports in general. I like to laugh and I don't think I'm a dumb Dora, but as I hea d one girl put it, "all the boys want nowadays is pep and pash!" Even in high school I began to notice the difference between me and the girls who are invited everywhere.

Most of them are no prettier than I, dress no better, have no more money. But they will do anything for a good time. I do not say that they are immoral. What I mean is that they let the boys go as far as they like, short of absolute wrong-doing. And they don't even

Unwise Social Freedom, or—

SLACKERS?

Doctors

By Mr. H.

stick to one. They mush anybody and everybody.

I can't and won't telephone a boy and ask him to take me out. When he does invite me to a dance I don't go off with him in his car, during the evening or after the party is over, and pet for an hour or more. I don't drink from his pocket flask, or tell or listen to suggestive stories. I haven't an inexhaustible stock of flattery and of silly personal remarks to jolly him along. Finally, I don't kiss him good-night the first time he brings me home.

Some boys get sore. Others say they're glad I'm different from the neckers. None ever asks me a second time! If there are those who like a girl with standards, they haven't the courage to act on their opinions when the leaders in their crowd scornfully dismiss her as all wet. I suppose by this time most of the boys in our small town have heard me called that, so this season I have had hardly any bids.

I stay at home evenings with a book, or go to the movies with one of the girls in my crowd. There are five or six of us who share prejudices—and unpopularity. My mother, poor dear, can't understand why boys so seldom come to the house, and why I don't want to give a party. They wouldn't come to it and the affair would be a frost—that's why. I can't tell tales about other girls to my mother, and probably I can never make her understand why I'm not in the crowd.

It isn't just my present situation about which I am unhappy, but what is going to become of me? I don't want a career; neither do I want to live at home all my life and dry up into a sour old maid. I want a good time like other girls and, like nine-tenths of them, I want, by-and-by, a husband and home and children of my own—I love children. If I'm going to be left out of everything, just because I can't forget my self-respect and because I won't let every boy kid me along—where am I going to get off? The girl who, from my point of view, makes a fool of herself seems to have all the fun and all the men and all the chances. Maybe I'm the fool for not imitating her. Aren't there some practical suggestions that such mature experience as yours can give me?

J. D. M.

My dear Miss J. D. M.:

The great point when you are dissatisfied with your life is not to sit still. Your letter proves that in addition to feeling that something is wrong you mean to do something about it—otherwise you would never have written. Life is good to those who show faith in its richness and possibilities, who believe there must be some answer to their problems.

A leaden word—problem. Although I have never been a girl of nineteen, possessed of character, good looks, a good home and a certain aversion to promiscuous petting, I can imagine few more delightful things in the world than to be just such a girl as yourself. If I were in your place I should not be worrying. I should probably just drift. And I should be wrong, all wrong.

For there is not a doubt in the world that your future happiness depends almost entirely upon the course you follow during the next few years. In other words your share of the real joy of life, your rightful share, may not come to you unless you correctly solve the problem you have stated so clearly in your letter. What is going to become of a girl like you who refuses to use the common methods of attracting men—and is unjustly punished by having them pass her by?

The shortest answer is that everything depends upon the sort of girl you are. When you read this last sentence you may exclaim, impatiently: "How stupid the man is! Haven't I told him all about myself in my letter?"

Not quite.

I know, for instance, that you despise mushing Tom, Dick, and Harry; that you have too much pride and sense of your own dignity to make up to boys or give them all they ask, even though you are well aware that they will think none the less of you for it but on the contrary will eagerly invite you for another party.

I don't know, however, what your attitude is toward the boys and girls who do these things as a matter of course. To look down on petting is to your credit. But if you also feel a contempt for your friends who do pet—because they see no especial harm in it—then you are making a mistake. That would make you out a prig—and there's no hope for a prig.

The one thing which makes boys fight shy of the superior girl, the girl who is "different," is a horrible fear that she may be a prig. A prig is a person who revels in his or her moral and spiritual attainments, who is literally engrossed in them. Nothing [*Continued on page 127*]

at her own hands and bare arms, round and luscious as ripe fruit, with a faint sprinkling of golden-silky hairs. Like a cold draft in the dark it struck her that her flesh must fade and shrivel too, must lose its power and beauty . . . O God, it wouldn't be so bad if only anything would ever happen . . . She would make things happen! . . . Whatever she did she wouldn't sit and dry up like Alma . . .

She heard Alma come in the back way and went to meet her, quietly, so as not to disturb the Judge. Arms about each other they went out to the back yard where a hammock swung and an old porch rocker stood under a catalpa tree.

"I just came to tell you we're going to start about four this afternoon," Ruth said. "We're going to drive to the end of the Canyon road and have lunch there and maybe climb to the top if everybody isn't too lazy. Then I thought maybe we could stop on the way back at Willow Springs and dance a while . . ."

"You want to do too much, child. You'll be dead tired."

"I'm never tired. You know that, Alma. Please don't go back on me today. I haven't danced in a coon's age."

"All right, dear. I'm awfully weary now, but I'll have time for a nap before that. Who's going?"

"Just you and Doc Jaggers and mother and Annie and that Mr. Fadden I told you about. I wanted to get up more of a bunch but I just couldn't. Men are so scarce in this town and there's no use making a hen party out of it."

Alma brought her eyes down from the sky to look at Ruth quizzically.

"Why didn't you invite John Romer. You and he seemed awfully interested in each other."

Ruth lifted a hand and made a mouth.

"The family is thumbs down on him. You might know that."

"Yes, I suppose so. Well, what's the new one like—that Mr. Fadden? I think you might have brought him around to tea or something."

"I haven't had a chance. He's not at all like what you would expect."

Alma laughed, patronizingly, as thirty-three is apt to laugh at twenty.

"Nobody ever is," she observed.

"No-o . . . But the Faddens have such a lot of money and he's lived in New York and went to Yale and everything. You'd expect something pretty classy. But he's just a big shy awkward kid. He's a year older than I am but he seems about fourteen. Of course, he's supposed to be sick, but he doesn't look it."

"What's the matter with him?"

"Well, his mother died last spring, so Mrs. Calder wrote, and he took it awfully hard and had flu and was threatened with pneumonia. They were afraid of T. B., I suppose. Anyway they sent him out here to get well. He needs a high altitude, Mrs. Calder wrote . . . He needs something, that's certain!" she added in a burst of irritation that surprised herself. "I never saw such a stick!"

Alma laughed again.

"Maybe you'll like him better when you get to know him . . . Men are a terrible disappointment to you, aren't they, dear?"

"Well . . . Haven't they been to you?"

"I guess they have," Alma conceded with a sigh. She lay in the hammock, looking up at nothing, her face wistful. Ruth wished she hadn't said that—especially the "haven't." She suddenly felt awfully sorry for Alma—the pity of youth full-blown for youth beginning to wane. Alma could still make herself look young sometimes at night, but lying tired in daylight she seemed almost middle-aged. Her figure was still good and she had pretty ankles, but her neck was beginning to wrinkle and she had a few gray hairs . . . Alma began to look old just about the time she went to work at the library.

That was just after her affair with Rupert Elwood. The old Judge broke it up they said. No daughter of his could marry a fiddler. Alma was a fool not to run off with Rupert if she had the chance. And she must have had the chance . . . You didn't lose out if you had any gumption! You didn't have to dry up like an unpicked apple on a tree! Poor old Alma! She had muffed her chance, that was all . . .

The one o'clock whistle sounded long and high and left the town in summer noontime heat and quiet. The machinery of the place was stopping for the week-end. The moment belonged to little near-by sounds and faint far-away ones—to the chirp of sparrows in the street, a distant phonograph playing "Red Hot Mama."

Ruth rose and touched Alma's hand, tenderly, in farewell.

"I've got to run, dear. See you at four. And don't bother about any lunch. Mother and I'll fix it . . ."

Her way home took her past the park. As she approached it she saw a man sitting on a bench, smoking a pipe. She looked at him hard . . . Yes, Romer . . . She hadn't thought of him all morning. With a frown of irritation she put on the brakes just in time to make a quick right hand turn, and went around a block . . .

CHAPTER III

ROMER came out upon the long veranda of the sanitarium and sat down suddenly in a rocking chair. He had just been pronounced a cure and his knees were weak with joy. He felt that before he could take another step he must stop and adjust himself to the momentous fact that he was going to live.

He had been up and about the town most of the summer and had regained a good part of his strength, but he had done that several times before, only to be struck down again by hemorrhage. So he had forced himself to regard these delicious days in the sun as a brief reprieve from a sentence of death. The deadly bugs were still in his lungs. They were only resting. Presently, he had believed, they would drive his life out through his throat, killing their host in a fury of over-reaching greed.

Now he had been assured that the bugs were beaten. Three months more he must loaf in the town, swallow raw eggs, bathe in the river and lie naked in the sun. Then he could go anywhere and do anything he chose. After being long a dead man in effect he was restored to life. He needed now to grasp this fact of his resurrection and to make his peace with all the surprising emotions it awoke.

He looked back in amazement upon that other man he had been in his university days, when he had achieved such an easy and complete despair. As a student he had listened with profound and gloomy assent to lectures which proved to him that he was made of unstable compounds and would presently decompose into elements. To escape his sense of doom, he put on a dinner suit and went to parties where he fox-trotted and necked pretty girls. In a select group of fellow spirits he talked of Life, and proved eloquently, with grim joy, that it is futile.

Through whole nights he read—the desperate, eager reading of youth, that seemed to melt his spirit, pour it into new forms, harden it, only to melt it again. He felt that he was a rootless being of mysterious destiny.

Then, as though to fulfill his prescience of disaster, war came and carried him to a training camp in the South. He tried all day to make himself into a good man-killing machine, ripping up a straw dummy with a bayonet, and on nights of leave he wandered sadly in the dark, seeing death always just ahead—except when woman came between.

Ella served coffee in a canteen and had a soft red mouth. It became the one great desire of his life to possess Ella before he died. For he was sure he was going to die and he made Ella share his conviction. She accepted coolly his hand and his insurance papers and they were married a week before he sailed—one week of intense and abandoned honeymoon in a New York hotel.

Ingloriously he fell to influenza germs instead of bullets. He knew the madness of high fevers in crowded hospitals. When he emerged he was no longer a man but a T. B. Periods of apparent recuperation were followed by hemorrhage and long inertia when he seemed but a corpse aware of itself.

But the hemorrhage that was to kill him never came. In this town of last resort he had mysteriously mended through long days of unbroken sunshine—and now he was sound again.

He felt himself a new man in a new world. Yet nothing was changed about that world. It was mysterious and terrible as ever. Nothing was changed except the way he felt. He had been all gloom and fear and now he was all joy and acceptance. He was filled with an immense greed for living.

He rose and went down the steps, out into the street. He would walk through the town and down to the river—take his daily swim. In a long slow saunter he would indulge his exalted mood to the full.

With his fellow patients he had whiled many long days reviling the town. To him as to most of them it had seemed a place of imprisonment and doom. How

different it looked to him now—the place that had given him back his life! How interesting and significant!

His route took him down Center Street, where a second-hand trolley, condemned by some larger town, screamed and thundered on flat wheels; jitneys puttered back and forth and lined busy sidewalks, movies bid for patronage with gaudy-colored prints of violent adventure and frantic love; too many stores battled for life under rag and paper banners that called attention to fire sales, inventory sales, moving sales, bankruptcy sales. Above the ruck of two-story frame and brick, the new bank building and the new hotel stood large and white, incongruous but promising, like first teeth in a baby's gums.

A few blocks farther, and he was in the respectable quiet of the residence section where shiny cars waited at the curb for women with silken legs and high heels, starting out to shop. Beyond this lay a fringe of shack, hovel and dump.

But for its far horizon of blue Rockies, it was much like a dozen other towns he had known. When the railroad dropped a few men of a certain kind here, this kind of town had grown up as surely as a plant from seed. It was like a hardy weed, he thought. It had killed out two other towns. The first was a sleepy little Mexican village of recumbent brown adobe in the shade of old trees—a helpless thing left behind by the waning power of Spain. Nothing remained of it now but a few old houses.

Before the railroad came a frontier town of wasteful enterprise and violent revel had lived here briefly. Old men could still describe it to him. Dance halls, saloons and gambling joints flared red and yellow along a single street. Cowboys, buffalo hunters, prospectors, played and fought, threw away life, money and energy. But the town needed that these things be used, not wasted. Pioneers did their job, and gave way to money-makers in stiff collars and stiff respectabilities.

The town was a lusty brute, he thought, changing the figure to suit his need, and men were what it ate. It had a sure appetite and no mercy. It used what it could and spat out what it found indigestible. It would spit him out as soon as it had sucked all the cash out of him, for he would not marry nor work here. He would make neither money nor men . . .

He had walked as far as the park where cottonwood trees shaded patchy grass, idle men dozed on benches, small children scrapped and frolicked.

The park interrupted the smooth-running current of his thought, because this was where he had always met her and just about this time. Although he had resolved the day before that he wouldn't, he sat down and lit a pipe, feeling foolish and uneasy, knowing she probably wouldn't come and yet hoping she would . . .

They had never made an appointment, but this bench had served them as a place for meetings supposed to be quite accidental. He sat there and smoked and almost every day she came along on her way to or from town. She called hello, stopped, and they talked a while, she watching furtively to see who passed. Then she invited him to ride.

They always drove up the valley to a grove of cottonwood trees about a ruined house—a forgotten place where hidden doves cooed and lizards ran and played over broken walls. She parked her car in the shade and turned her impish smile on him, her red hair wind-rumpled and her blue eyes bright with challenge and fun. She was all mischief and desire. She was at once a woman meeting a lover and kid stealing sweets.

WHAT does "Legation Liquor" mean to a Washington flapper? Why is a sprained ankle fatal to popularity? What does a certain young prince think of a girl who doesn't Charleston? If you want the low-down on the origin of the young crowd's wittiest sayings read—

WHERE THE JAZZ BEGINS

in the August McCLURE'S

For her parents would have disapproved of him most strongly. Both of them understood that, without discussion. He had not the makings of a husband. He was a married man and a sick man. He had no money and no job. He was a stranger with strange ideas . . . He was taboo . . .

That was no small part of his charm for her. He was that rare and precious thing—a perilous adventure.

Just why she had gotten such a hold on *his* imagination was not equally clear to him. He had not been lonely in the town. A good many women had smiled on him as women nearly always did wherever he went. But it was only her smile that he remembered . . .

He remembered it now with chagrin. For she had simply gone off and left him sitting there. A week ago he had thought he was on the verge of conquest and now he had not seen her for a week, except once at a distance—and with another man.

He got up and walked on kicking savagely at a pebble on the sidewalk. What an idiot he was to keep on thinking about her and looking for her . . . Common sense dwindled as desire grew. He had observed that humiliating phenomenon in himself and others many times, but he had learned nothing from it . . .

SHE was a stupid little wench, after all. Intelligence was a faculty she lacked. Cunning she had, and a kind of intuitive acuteness. He could not deny that she had understood pretty well what kind of man he was in relation to her. She had always shown herself to him as a sophisticated young person, wholly above the town and its petty strictures. She had chosen her pose not without judgment and held it with some skill—enough so that he had been baffled of the reality behind it.

He never knew what she was thinking. And she never knew what he was talking about. Their conversation had been a failure. But their love-making was a stirring success. And they didn't seem to need many words. It was well enough understood between them that they met to play and parted without obligation.

It was wholly within their unspoken agreement for her to drop him whenever she pleased. His sense of justice came to her rescue. But his irritation against her remained. He couldn't forget how she had felt in his arms, round, smooth and strong, the taste of her mouth and the smell of her hair . . .

His morning was ruined. That was clear. A little while before he had been surveying light from heights of serene detachment. Now he was only a jilted swain with a queer ache in his middle. He had looked at the town with complete impersonality, relishing it as spectacle. Now he felt merely outcast.

He had walked himself out of the town without exactly knowing where he was going . . . The irrigated valley lay all about him, flat and green between barren uplands. It was rank with the smell of mud in the sun and of things growing thick and crowded.

He went up the river to a secluded bend where a dense growth of cottonwood and butterwillow pushed down against the hurried water. He had come to regard the place as his own because he had never met another human near it.

He stripped in a bit of shade and plunged, as was his daily habit. His skin was sunbrowned from many such plunges, so that he looked not strange, but as though he belonged to the water. Its current bore him along in a gentle and effortless ride. He swam on his back and was suddenly aware of the sky, not as blue vacancy, but as a many-storied world where gnats and midges lived just over his nose, butterflies and dragonflies wandered and played a few feet higher, cliff swallows hunted invisible prey above the tree tops, and up near a lone white cloud a buzzard sailed endless patient circles.

He crawled out of the water feeling washed of woe and desire. Seeking a bit of shade he sat down—comfortable, permanent and unconcerned like a turtle on a log.

From where he sat he could see nothing but river, sand, trees, pale yellow hills that bounded the valley, and a range of purple mountains looking over them.

Here was the peace of the earth before man came to disturb it.

Once he had thought he would like to seek out some such place and live there alone with his thought. Now, after a little while, it seemed to him only a beautiful emptiness.

He rose and began pulling on his pants, wondering whether Ruth Bruck would be at the Springs Pavilion that night, deciding not to go there, knowing that probably he would . . .

CHAPTER IV

COLD ham and potato salad.
Lettuce and mayonnaise.
Bread and butter.
Iced tea.

That was what they always had for lunch on Saturday because it was the girl's day out and the delicatessen profited by her absence.

It was hotter inside the Bruck house than outdoors. That was the trouble with bungalows. They hoarded heat like fireless cookers.

The Brucks sat down to lunch in weary silence. It was too hot to talk and too hot to eat. In fact, it was too hot to live. One could only hope to survive until the sun went down.

Mr. Bruck frowned at his lunch and picked at his salad with a fork as though he expected to find a worm in it. Heat always brought out the worst of his humors. He was too stout to stand it well.

His humor now, as always, dominated the family group. When Dad frowned no one could make mirth and when his spirits were high he still had power to stir a gale of laughter that would carry them all along with him.

For he had been a famous joker in his time. Back in the horse and buggy days of the late nineties and early nineteen-hundreds he had been the life of every lively party in the town. He was the wild boy then, whom nearly everybody liked and everybody deplored. But at forty-five Gus Bruck was more than a little sour, and none knew it better than his family. Ruth could remember well how much jollier he had been when she was a little girl and he took her for walks in the park. They were good pals then. But during the last five years their relations had become steadily worse. At least once a week there was a grand family row about what she had been doing and what she ought to do.

One of these rows hung over them now. Ruth and her mother both could see it coming. They knew the signs of paternal displeasure—his frown, his silence, his lack of appetite.

Mrs. Bruck looked as miserable as a woman sentenced to death. She was especially eager to avoid a scene today. Dread tightened the lines of her face and apprehension looked out of her eyes.

Father was going to make a scene, she knew. Just when she wanted Ruth to look her sweetest and prettiest he was going to upset them all. In a thin dry voice she tried feebly to fend off the inevitable by making conversation.

"I do hope it'll be cooler this evening. The paper predicted rain . . . Why don't you eat your salad, father? It won't keep in this weather . . ."

Mr. Bruck disregarded her completely. He laid his knife and fork across his plate and pronounced his invariable preliminary of battle.

"Annie, since you seem to be through, you may leave the room."

Annie,—small, skinny, dark—looked at him and blinked her eyes with astonishing rapidity. She seemed to be paralyzed in her chair.

"Don't do that!" Mr. Bruck commanded. "It's nothing but a habit and there's no excuse for it. I've told you a thousand times not to blink that way . . . Will you leave the room?"

Annie blinked faster than ever, squeezing out a tear or two in the process—then suddenly slid out of her chair and ran.

Mr. Bruck turned upon his remaining victims and cleared his throat.

"Ruth, there's one thing I want to have an understanding about . . . You are not on any account to see anything more of that Romer fellow . . . If you do, I shall refuse you the use of the car and stop your account at Greenbaum's . . ."

"O father . . . Please father," Mrs. Bruck interceded with a quaver. "Ruth and I had a talk about that. My little girl has promised . . . really she has."

"She's promised a good many things!"

The Bobber Shop

Next month
BERTON BRALEY
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ARTHUR WILLIAM BROWN
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Mr. Bruck now turned upon his wife.

"Listen to this! Ralph Shaner came to me the other day and told me he had seen Ruth and that fellow up the valley in our car. Ralph is a brother Mason of mine and a fellow Kiwanis and I've known him for twenty years. He wouldn't come to me with any stories if he didn't think it was his duty. He was nice enough about it—said he thought I probably didn't know much about the man and Ruth didn't either . . . Of course, everybody knows he's just a loafer and a lunger to boot. He left a wife behind him somewhere, and he hasn't got a thing to his name but a little government disability pension—no job, no profession, nothing but a cheap line of highbrow patter that women fall for . . . It was bad enough for Ruth to run around with that good-for-nothing Billop kid. I didn't like it, but I didn't say anything because at least he belongs to the town and we know something about his folks. Billop's a client of mine and a brother Elk . . . But this bum I won't stand for and that's flat! He's a wife deserter and a fellow that makes a boast of his immorality . . . It's as much as any girl's reputation is worth just to be seen alone with him. If Ruth ever goes near him again and I find it out, I'm going to stop her allowance and lock up the car . . . That's flat! I slave and sweat to keep her dressed, and God knows she buys enough clothes for six women and never has enough on at that, and then my reward is to have her go out and disgrace me and the whole family . . ."

He fell back in his chair, spent and perspiring.

Ruth could feel her throat filling with rage and grief, tears pricking her eyelids. She was going to cry! She wanted to fight back but she was going to cry instead, as she always did at family rows.

"I'll say one thing for him," she gulped desperately. "He's the only man I know in this town that isn't an old woman. He's the only one that doesn't peddle a lot of lies about everybody he knows . . ."

She broke into sobs, flung away from the table, swinging her hips and shoulders in frustrate rage, flopped down on the couch and buried her face in her arms. Mrs. Bruck rose and hurried to her side with short, quick, nervous steps.

"There, there, dear . . . You mustn't cry . . . You mustn't cry now . . .Your eyes'll be red . . ."

Mr. Bruck got up, threw down his napkin, snorted and stamped himself out of the house. As soon as he drew tears the battle was over for him. He never fought an issue to a finish and he never carried out any of his threats.

Mrs. Bruck bent over Ruth, stroked her hair, patted her heaving shoulder—timid, tentative, frightened of this creature that had sprung from her womb so much stronger, more vivid and passionate than she was, and yet owning her, body and spirit. It was her agony to live in this being she could neither control or comprehend far more than she lived in herself.

"O my darling! Please don't cry. It'll make your eyes red. And you're freckled and sunburned, too . . . O my pet, why will you do things like that? Why must you cheapen yourself by running after men that aren't good enough to wipe your shoes, and let people talk about you the way they do? Can't you see how foolish it is—how awful? If only you would stay at home and be nice, and keep yourself sweet and white and pure! There wouldn't be a lovelier girl in town . . . You don't understand life, dear. If you would only trust me . . . You think there's something wonderful about love and passion. And there isn't, there isn't! It's just pain and sorrow. That's all it's ever been to me. There's nothing better in life than being sweet and good and doing your duty and having a nice home . . . Please don't cry any more now . . ."

BUT it was just this kind of thing that made Ruth cry. She seldom cried, and seldom felt like crying, except when the family worked on her feelings. Then she couldn't help it. Under that thin gentle hand, that anxious tender voice, she lost herself, shrank and dwindled, became again a babe in arms, chidden and comforted. She was all remorse and re-

pentance. For the moment she *was* sweet, pure and good. Mother was right—for the moment.

They clung together, ever so close together, almost one, until her sobs died away and for a while afterwards, saying nothing, passive and peaceful. Ruth finally sat up, hot and flushed, mopping her eyes.

"We've got to fix that lunch."

"Never you mind, darling. I'll fix it."

"No . . . I want to help . . . please . . ."

"No, dear," firmly. "You go upstairs and bathe your eyes in boric acid and lie down and take a nap . . . after all you've been through! . . . I'll fix the lunch."

Her room was a record of her blooming. The white bedroom set her father had given her for her sixteenth birthday, and her mother had contributed the white and blue chintz curtains and the blue silk bed-spread. When she graduated from high school the next year, they both gave her the ivory-backed toilet set which was spread out neatly on the dressing table, with its bevelled oval mirror. High school was commemorated also by her framed diploma and a group photograph of her graduating class.

THEY were a goofy-looking bunch, she thought, with the girls in long white dresses like nightgowns—funny how styles changed in a few years and how ridiculous the old ones looked—but she liked the picture because hers was almost the only good portrait in it. She was right in the middle beside Walt Gibby, the valedictorian, and she had a proud, far-away look in her eyes. Anyone might have guessed that she was in love with him then. Walt confronted the world with a stern, determined expression. She had thought he looked noble then, but it struck her now that he looked like a conceited young ass, which he certainly was.

Being in her own room made her feel better and more like herself. Having bathed her eyes and her face and put on a blue silk kimono, she stretched out on the bed feeling as though she could sleep. All of her troubles had run out of her, for the time being, with her tears. She was relaxed and pacified. But as soon as she lay down the temperature seemed to rise about ten degrees. Her pillow was like a hot water bottle. She moved restlessly about, pursuing the chimera of a cool spot.

It was the hottest day so far that summer. . . . Good thing they were going to the mountains. It would be cool up there. If only it didn't rain . . .

No use trying to sleep in this oven . . . A cool bath and then down cellar. Why hadn't she thought of it before? Mother didn't like her to go down in the cellar, but mother would be done with the lunch by this time and gone to her own room.

In the bathroom she bunched her short flaming hair under a cool blue rubber cap, dropped off her kimono and retired behind the rubber curtain that confined the shower to the tub. She turned on the cold full force and took it with delicious shock, greedy of sensation. She felt as though she could have stayed under it all day. It seemed to wash away all thought and memory of everything else. Finally dry and cool she got back into kimono and slippers, and went silently to the cellar door and down into damp coolness.

Under a small cellar window was an old leather-covered couch with several broken springs, retired from the front room for permanent disability. It was littered with old magazines and Sunday newspapers—rich forage for idle browsing. Hidden under it were several books, including "Jurgen," "What a Young Man Ought to Know," and "The Yoke." They had been acquired during several years by stealth or accident, devoured with keen curiosity, and buried here, like corpses of crime, for lack of a better place. She had not been forbidden to read them, but if mother ever found them it would mean a row.

The cellar had been her special province since the age of five. The little house lacked a nursery, so she had been allowed to play here and accumulate childish treasure. Many of her happiest memories were associated with the cellar. Hundreds of times, as now, she had lain here, feeling curiously secure and peaceful, staring up at a little oblong window flush with the lawn. She seldom went down cellar any more because mother didn't like it. "It was all right when you were a little girl, but it seems ridiculous now." Despite this change in her relation to it, resulting from an accretion of dignity, the cellar remained a place of welcome refuge from the family, especially when no one knew she was there.

She lay at full length on the old sofa, letting her kimono fall away from her, looking down upon her own nakedness from the eminence of a cushion, as a traveller surveys a lovely country from a hill.

The blooming of her body was recent enough so that she still saw its ripe beauty sometimes with a thrill of wonder. At sixteen it had seemed to her a promise of joy . . . At twenty the promise remained unfulfilled.

CHAPTER V.

WALT GIBBY was her first. The Gibby's lived next door then. She was eight and he was ten. She climbed the high green board fence that stood between them one day, and saw little Walt digging. He was digging a long trench in his back yard and he had boards to roof it, to cover with dirt, making a burrow—long, dark, deep, cool—to crawl into and hide. Perched on top of the fence, she was wholly captivated by his masculine enterprise.

"Hello," she ventured.

Walt looked up dubious. "Hello," he conceded, and went on digging.

"Want me to help you?" she volunteered.

"Nope," said Walt.

She pondered this. "I'll come down and help you," she decided.

Walt submitted, helpless, and suspicious at first. But comradeship in work overcame his skirt-shyness. They toiled together furiously, like two mating rodents. The hole was finished, roofed. Its wide black swallowing mouth invited them.

"You go in first," she said.

"No," he said, "you go in first."

She crawled in and he came after. Clear to the wider place at the end they crawled, and there were jammed together in darkness and intimacy, titillating, revealing. "Oooo!" she cooed. "Gosh!" said Walt.

After a long, still, thrilling time came the voice of Walt's mother. "WalTER! WALter!" Neither of them moved. She was scared, but not as much as Walt. She could feel him tremble. The voice wandered above them, finally sounded at the mouth of the cave. "WalTER! Come out of there!" And the rest was terrible to remember, with Mrs. Gibby scolding and Walt howling, and she scurrying for the fence, covered with dirt and disgrace . . .

THE romance lapsed until high school. The Gibby's moved and Walt, although in the same grade, went to school in a different ward. Moreover, Walt was a boy's boy, large for his age and strong, a leader by right of weight and punch, famous for his skill in games.

At high school they met in the same room like strangers, so much were both of them changed when she was fifteen and he was seventeen. She was the best-looking girl in the class with the possible exception of Eva Niflot. She and Eva were inevitably enemies, equal in charm and opposite in method and temper. Eva was discreet, adroit and cunning. She stood in with teachers and principal, and she was ever so nice and innocent with elders and boys—but the things she could say in a whisper! She was the wise little girl that told all the other little girls all about it, loving to shock and amaze them with her knowledge.

Ruth was no less wise for her years. But she had none of Eva's finesse and discretion. She was more inclined to blurt than to whisper, and more likely to lose her temper and call names face to face than to backbite. It was not surprising that Eva gave it out as her confidential opinion that Ruth was a vulgar, loud-mouthed thing, nor that Ruth told Eva to her face that she was a dirty sneak.

The real cause of war between them was Walt Gibby. He was president of the class, captain of the football team, organizer of the glee club, great man of the school. He had also the approval of his elders; was spoken of as a splendid boy—a nice clean boy. A long row of fat jobs sat waiting his choice when he should graduate.

Either Ruth or Eva was sure to be his girl, and for a long time Eva seemed to hold that honor. He took her to dances and walked home with her sometimes. But her hold on him was never secure. He looked at Ruth too much.

The thing that drew him at last to Ruth's side was her prowess in mathematics. For geometry she had a gift in which he was wholly lacking, and this deficiency threatened his prestige and even his graduation. It was his salvation when Ruth, sitting beside him after school, showed him how to do the next day's work and coached him for tests.

Eva then lost out bitterly, for she was almost as helpless with an isosceles triangle as was Walt. Now Ruth and Walt went to school dances and movies together and late at night stood on her front porch saying good-bye, experimenting with kisses that grew longer and more complicated each time.

Then they graduated and Walt delivered a thundering, red-faced valedictory which was printed in full in the local paper. He was frightfully stuck-up over it, and so was she. Walt was going into the First National in the fall, and that was about the most promising start a boy could make. The First National was the heart of the town, controlling the money that was its life-blood. Newspapers and politicians took their orders from it and business men asked it what they could do. It was where Walt belonged.

The last of high school was the annual class picnic in Wild Cat Canyon. School picnics in the mountains had a feeling and function all their own, well understood and never stated. Things happened—old relations broke and new ones formed. Boys and girls scattered in couples among rocks and trees and came back late and tired, looking at each other with different eyes.

She ran up the mountain ahead of Walt and she felt light-footed and strong as a goat. Far away from everyone she led him, both of them laughing, among great round boulders milled by ancient seas, patchy scrub oak like thick close hair on massive flanks. He began to help her, pulling her up steep places and catching her when she slipped.

EACH time he touched her she grew weaker in the knees. His kisses were blows beating her down. These were not like kisses on the front porch with mother just overhead, probably awake and listening. There was nothing here to support a tension of caution and resistance. Here were only mountains and silence.

Her whole body narrowed to a channel of desire. She sank down at the foot of a tree with her eyes closed, grateful for every pressure of his arms and mouth . . .

A moment of sweet and terrible suspense . . . and then . . . he was gone!

When he saw there was no resistance in her he simply snatched himself out of peril, dropping her as a thing too hot to hold . . . Frightened, astounded, he stood looking down at her . . .

In her eyes he shrank suddenly. Her hero had evaporated in the heat of desire, and there remained only a scared little boy she remembered.

She was on her feet, shamed and angry. One disgusted, punishing look she gave him and walked away, back down the mountain, with him following uncomfortably silent.

Oh, she well enough understood! He was the nice clean boy with the perfect reputation and the wonderful prospects. He couldn't take any chances. And she had threatened violation of the unwritten code which provides that a nice girl may go ever so far but no farther, and that hers is the responsibility for stopping. If she had said don't at the right time, all would have been well. But there hadn't been a don't in her head. Everything in her had cried yes . . . He was right, of course, as he always was. And how she hated and despised him for it!

After a little painful while he looked at her, grinned sheepishly, and offered to help her down a steep incline. And she repulsed him with dignity. "No, thank you. I've been walking alone for years." That settled it. Her pride and bad temper settled it. "You're likely to walk alone for a good many more years." His reply was angry and disgusted. He probably did not mean it as a prophecy.

He went straight to Eva, when they reassembled at the cars, and took her away from Henry Rogers as easily as if Henry hadn't been there. Eva was humble. Eva was all glad surprise. And he made the situation as plain to everybody as he could. He left Ruth sitting alone and fussed around Eva as though he had just discovered her. He left Ruth the odd girl in a car, wedged into a corner behind fat Nelly Darnell, who crushed her like a living symbol of her misery.

It seemed to her that never could any human have been so miserable before. Cars roared home in moonlight. Voices singing in chorus rose above the hum of motors. Everybody was tired, relaxed, happy—everybody but her. Almost everybody was in some one else's arms. Each carload was knit together by arms and fingers into a single singing thing of melody and tenderness. And she was outside of it, hating the touch and sound of it.

After a while they got back onto speaking terms, but she hated him and she knew he hated her. Moreover, Eva had him hard and fast. She was wearing a ring for him now. Old man Niflot was a considerable stockholder in the First National, and it was said he liked Walt and was going to push him right along in the bank. Walt was seen driving his mother and Mrs. Niflot together in the Niflot car.

That was the end of her first affair and also the beginning of a reputation which had grown ever since.

The girl who lost her first man always carried as a handicap the town's explanation of how she came to lose him. The way such stories came into being and travelled was subtle and mysterious. Walt was too nice a boy to say anything about a girl—at least, anything explicit. Eva was conspicuously kind to Ruth now, and whenever she had anything to say about her she would end with a little formula of hers. "But don't think she's not a nice sweet girl because she is. I'm awfully fond of Ruth." This came back to Ruth several times. She hated Eva.

FOR a while after high school there were many parties where the old bunch foregathered, and she went to most of them—sometimes with one boy, sometimes with another. But she had no steady. And so many of these boys who had grown up with her were going away—some to college and some to take jobs.

The trouble was, from her point of view, that three boys left the town for every girl that did. And what use were most of those that stayed at home? They got little piddling jobs at fifteen or twenty dollars a week. It took a boy ten years to get a start unless his father left him a business. Most of those she knew couldn't have paid for her clothes, much less for a house and a car. But would any of them look twice at a girl that didn't dress? Not they! A girl needed a thousand dollars worth of clothes to interest a twenty dollar a week man.

She watched other girls get married. How did they do it? One thing that helped was a father with something to leave. She didn't miss that fact. She didn't fail to reflect that if Dad had piled up something instead of spending it all as fast as he made it, she would have stood a better chance. Look at the four Gearhardt girls. They were all stupid and three of them were homely, but old Gearhardt owned real estate worth a couple of hundred thousand. All four of the girls got married.

Conny Billop was the last boy of her own generation in the town she ever ran around with. It was a foolish thing to do, of course. Conny had already established himself as town good-for-nothing. But he was a man—at least in looks. He could dance. He had the family car three times a week. And she was so lonely.

Moreover, as they soon found, they had a shared emotion in their hatred for the town.

"I'm gonna blow!" He said it again and again. It was the explosive peroration of all his diatribes.

The first thing they discovered in common was a passionate love of motors and of fast and reckless driving. They went for long rides together several times a week, sometimes in the Billop Chandler, and when that was not available, in the Bruck Buick. They would lift a white trail of dust fifty or a hundred miles across hard prairie roads, caring not at all where they went, revelling in speed and wind. Several times they parked in a side road near River Hall and Conny went in, bought a couple of

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MARDI GRAS MADNESS

highballs and sneaked them out to her with exaggerated precaution. They drank with chuckles of triumph. This was defiance of every authority they knew.

"Here's to crime," said Conny, as he lifted his glass.

Ruth choked a little on hers, but once it was down it was fine.

Some nights they parked at the top of Hairpin Hill from which they saw the town as a small, bright, far-away splatter of lights. It was Conny who first made her think of the town as a thing that stood between her and her desires.

"Y'know what I'm gonna do, Ruth? I'm gonna get a job and save me up a roll of jack—say a thousand bucks—and then I'm gonna blow for New York. There's a hundred chances in New York for one here, and there's something to do when you're not working. You can go to a different show every night in the year, and you can see all the big league games and the heavy-weight scraps. And there's that night life on Broadway. In a place like New York you can do what you please and get away with it!"

She did not believe Conny would ever see the lights of Broadway—at least not for a long time. Neither did Conny's conception of metropolitan life as an endless show especially interest her. But given the idea she had imagination enough to create a New York of her own and see herself in it—a world of limitless freedom, where men and money abounded, and where, above all, she would not walk haunted by the ghosts of all her follies.

She rated herself a cynic now—an embittered woman. She had been prepared to despise Conny, and had taken up with him only because nothing better offered. But she could feel her hardness melting. She felt the misery under his brave words—the misery of rejection and defeat which she too had known.

Conny was certainly slower than she would ever have imagined—than anyone would have imagined who heard him talk. A bold and reckless fellow he pictured himself. Yet when silences of sympathy fell upon them as they sat in the parked car, no one within miles, Conny seemed uncomfortable. Moments came when kisses seemed as inevitable as sunrise, but Conny let them pass. She could feel his eyes exploring her, yearning toward her, but his hands seemed afraid to follow. And when finally they did come, they fumbled nervously.

She laughed and let herself fall against him, almost putting herself in his arms. And so they achieved their first kiss.

That first evening of unself-conscious intimacy was the best they ever knew of each other. Their kisses seemed for the moment a complete and perfect consummation. They would kiss and laugh and kiss again.

But when next they met a few days later, Conny seemed wholly changed. He who had been so timid now was full of what the girls called caveman stuff.

It was a rôle for which he lacked talent. She could imagine herself being overwhelmed by a strong man. In fact she had imagined it more than once. But Conny was not a strong man either in muscle or in personality. She found that she could hold him with ease and got satisfaction out of doing so. He threw out bold and desperate hints as to what they might do, indicated that he was prepared for any emergency.

"You needn't be afraid, Ruth . . . I'm wise to things . . ."

When she tittered he was angry. What a fool he was!

She was tempted to make an end of the affair more than once, but something about it held her. She got fun out of thwarting him.

One evening, when he had parked the car and turned toward her, she knew by the smell of his breath that he had primed himself for a great effort. When she held him off his hands suddenly closed on her in a spasm of violence and his face and neck reddened. For the first time she was a little afraid of him . . .

"You will!"

"I won't!"

And then his preposterous ultimatum—one so old that it had gone into disuse even as a tawdry joke—

"Either you will or you'll get out and walk!"

NEXT MONTH

Ruth faces more disappointments. During the picnic on the mountain, which she had planned so carefully, a terrible thunder storm occurs. Ordinarily thunder storms spoil picnics, and Ruth and Wilbur are caught in this one—far up the mountain away from the rest of the party. What happened? Read the next dramatic instalment of HOT SATURDAY *in August McClure's.*

Summer Bachelors—Continued from page 47

and simpering kittens cast for it?"

"Oh, don't mind him," put in Willowdean in her serene voice. "Everybody's nerves get frazzled at one time or another."

"You were taking good care of yours," snapped Cole. "I didn't notice you wasting any time on the rehearsal. Of course, you're not on in the second. But seeing you're the only one of the lot with a pretense of human intelligence, you might stick around."

"We thank you, one and all," said Miss McIntyre, with suspicious sweetness, and turned to Blakely for sympathy. "I simply can't get the lines fast," she complained.

"Did you ever try studying them with a sheet?"

"No; nor a pillowcase," giggled the girl. "What do you think I am, a Kleagle?"

"Try it. Hang the sheet up so that when you face it you can't see anything else. Then strip your mind of everything for five minutes——"

"That'll be simple," inserted Cole, in a pretended *sotto voce*.

"—and take up whatever passage troubles you most. Presently you'll find the lines transferring themselves to the white surface."

Cole straightened up from his unseemly posture. "Where do you get that?"

"It's one of our simplest experiments. Setting the sub-memory to work."

"You're not the Professor Blakely, by good luck, are you?"

"I am."

"Oh, hell! Why couldn't you say so?" The playwright's whole manner changed. "I've got a hypnotism stunt in the third act. It's only a josh, but I'd like to have it O. K. Would you help me rehearse it?"

"Why—I—it's out of my line," began the other.

"Say yes," signaled Willowdean imperatively.

"But I'll be glad to do what I can."

"That's all right, then. Let's open one more bottle."

Bev was now dancing with the diminutive Miss McIntyre. Richard Otley came over from another table and carried off Derry to the floor. Blakely silently queried Willowdean who, after a moment's hesitancy, nodded.

"You mustn't mind poor Martin," she murmured as they swung into the tide. He said once that I couldn't act and was only something to build scenery around, and he wasn't so far wrong."

"It isn't scenery that I could build around you," he murmured.

"What, then?"

"Dreams."

"Flimsy architecture," she rallied. "Besides, all your dreams would be neatly catalogued for analysis and report, wouldn't they? I don't believe you know how to dream—not about a woman."

"I've never had the inclination to before."

"Anyway, remember that if Mart was crisp, rehearsing is a dog's life for everybody."

"I'd dislike him more, if I weren't so sorry for him."

"He'd be awfully bored at your pity. What are you sorry for him about?"

"Being so desperately in love with you."

"Being in love doesn't hurt men. It's good for them."

"Not as he's in love. And perhaps not being in love with you."

"Why?" she asked innocently. "It's permissible, isn't it?" Her narrowing, softening, liquid eyes added: "To you—if you like?"

"I should think it might be hell. Or heaven."

The music stopped, resumed, died out again, answered still another encore and finally rested. The others drifted back to their places.

"Where are Blackie and Willowdean?" asked Bev.

"I think the lady and the gentleman have left." It was the waiter who supplied the information.

Cole's jaw dropped. "Well, that's a hell of a note," he observed painedly.

"Your academic ground-owl is certainly getting off the mark in front of the field," chuckled Derry to Bev.

"I wish I were as good!" he returned enviously.

Her last word to him at her door as she gently released herself from his clasp was: "No, Bev, please. Not tomorrow. No; it isn't another date. I did have one with Mr. Otley, but I've got out of it. I want a chance to rest; to think, really; to be quiet and think things over."

"What kinds of things?" he demanded jealously.

"Oh, lots of kinds. You. And me. And . . . all sorts of things. You *are* a dear, Bev!"

But her final waking thought that night was not of Beverly Greenway. It was of Martin Cole and his pathetically lost expression when he had looked for Willowdean and failed to find her.

CHAPTER VI

BEVERLY GREENWAY was out of town for a week or more. A timberland deal in which his firm was interested had summoned him, very reluctant, to the Northwest. At first he had declared violently to Derry that he wouldn't go; he wasn't going to leave her, just as——

"Just as what?" she challenged, when he checked himself, uncertain.

"I don't know," he answered miserably. "That's the whole trouble. That's why I hate to go."

"You've got to," she decided. "I'm not going to vamp your business career, whatever else I may do."

"May I write to you?"

"If you don't write," she laughed, "and tell me that you love me, I'll—I'll catch cold in my heart and sniffle myself to death."

To have him go was, in its way, a relief; a slackening of the constant pressure, the ever-present urgency which she felt when with him. Yet she missed him a lot. She missed the masculine warmth of his presence, the magnetism of his great physical vitality, the excitation of his kisses. That phase of his attraction was and had been from the first, overemphasized; she was clear-headed enough to admit this to herself and to recognize the reason. Vivid young womanhood cannot be wholly shut off from its natural right of association and companionship without demanding arrears of payment when its time comes.

None of the others quite took Bev's place. Preston Smith she saw most frequently and liked the best, but his appeal was to another side of her nature. He stimulated her mind and imagination; never her womanhood, nor did he attempt to. He had not so much as kissed her. For that she liked and respected him, while it piqued her a little. Sometimes she guessed that his attitude concealed a determined self-control, for there were not lacking occasional subtle betrayals of a definite masculine interest in her.

With Richard Otley it was different; she found it difficult to trust him at all. The "rose-scatterer," as Prenny Smith had called him, was persisting in his leisurely, self-possessed stalking of her. She had felt from the first a deliberateness of intention in his attitude.

In Richard Otley's company she was always conscious of the prickling, self-provocative excitement of the woman ruthlessly pursued. He had his own distinctive qualities; poise, a restful intelligence, a chilling gift of criticism, implied as often as expressed, and the sense of strength and confidence in himself that comes only of long and assured authority. Also he gave out, though probably without being conscious of it, an impression of something subtle, something secret and withheld. Derry could imagine a woman marrying Otley just to find out about it. His wooing of her—for it had developed unobtrusively into that—was deliberate, calculated, and always controlled. If she kissed him good night, she made herself marble in his arms—and he laughed at her with a subdued confidence, which filled her with exasperation and misgivings.

Twice she had seen Tony Landor at the Recherché, but had had the caution not to expose herself to another high-minded snub by making any sign of recognition.

She had learned a little more about him from a jovial sketch in one of the flippant magazines, purporting to give a brief outline of how various prominent New Yorkers passed their town-bound days of the summer. "Diversions of a Deserted Town" was the title, and Mr. A. N. Landor, "the young first Vice-President of the Surety Life Assurance Company" was credited with having a fad for "heat-riding on nocturnal bus tops." It seemed hardly in character to Derry. But thereafter, when she was out in the evening, she found herself unconsciously elevating her nose to the angle of the lofty seats above the Fifth Avenue pavement. And she did actually sight him once. So the magazine gossip was right. A queer pastime.

One hot night when she had been waiting for Willowdean at the theater, they came out opposite a blocked bus, and Derry's tentative glance halted and widened. She caught her companion by the arm.

"Come on!" she said breathlessly.

Willowdean struggled in her grip. "Where are you going? That's an uptown bus."

"I don't care. Hurry!"

"But we're due at the Recherché at——"

"The Recherché can wait. This won't."

Nor did it. They scrambled aboard as it rocked its way forward, like a tunbellied dory in a high seaway, climbed desperately to the upper deck, and clawed their lurching way, under Derry's leadership, to a forward seat next behind that of a lone male passenger who appeared lost in private thought.

"You nut!" gasped Willowdean. "I hate buses."

Derry ignored this expression of disgust. She waited for the next block signal when her voice would not be handicapped by the jolting and began in the manner of one narrating a fairy tale:

"Then the horrid, great ogre looked at the innocent little girl and saw that she was good to eat. So he pointed to the copper-colored dress——"

She paused for effect, and got it. The man in front started, half turned, but stopped his pivoting neck with a last-moment check.

"What are you raving about?" murmured Willowdean.

"The story I promised you, my chee-ild. So the ogre pointed to the copper-colored cloth and said in a terrible voice: 'Take that one and I will pay for it.' The little girl was very meek and obedient, and always did as her elders told her, so she took it and said: 'Thank you, kind ogre.' And that's all."

"If that's all," objected Willowdean reasonably, "I dont' see that it was worth beginning."

"Maybe it wasn't. I don't like it any better than you do."

"Those things don't end that way." Willowdean had come to perceive a practical application in the legend, though she could not yet judge its exact bearing.

"How do they end, then?"

"Why, the copper-colored dress ought to be bewitched, and it delivers the innocent little girl into the power of the horrid, great ogre, and he carries her off to his lair and eats her alive."

"This ogre was too sophisticated; he didn't have any appetite for innocent little girls."

"Then of course he wasn't an ogre at all." Willowdean was playing up beautifully now. "He was a fairy prince pretending to be an ogre, and when the innocent little girl tried on the copper-colored dress it turned all silvery and goldy and sprouted a long white veil, and the band struck up the Lohengrin Wedding March, and so they were married and lived happily ever after."

"This ogre was already married. And if he wasn't really an ogre—I think you may be right about that—he was just an illustration out of an etiquette book, a sort of cut-out, you know. Oh, he was *very* stiff and starched and pasteboardy. And when he saw the innocent little girl in her pretty copper-colored dress, he was so proud and haughty and honorable and all that, that he— What do you think he did?"

"What did he do?" responded Willowdean in awed anticipation.

"He didn't do a darn thing," replied Derry, slowly. "And *I* think his middle name is Blah."

The man in front rose, he turned, he took off his hat, he made one step, he bent, he kissed Derry Thomas full and firm upon her amazed and unprepared lips; he then stopped the bus and went on his calm and silent way.

"Just what do you mean, blah?" inquired Willowdean urbanely, as the bus renewed its jolting progress. "Do you know that dear young man?"

"I know his name. It's Landor. I didn't know his habits. They're sudden."

"He certainly does obey that impulse. What Landor is it?"

"How should I know? I believe he's some kind of a mogul in the Thingumwichett Insurance Company."

"Then it *is* the famous 'Tony' Landor. I thought I'd seen him before."

Derry yawned elaborately. "Yes? What's he famous for?"

"Oh, I don't know. He's just Tony Landor. And, incidentally, he's supposed to be everything that is most correct and proper and discreet. One of our rising young men, in short."

Derry shook her head. "There's a catch somewhere. He buys copper-colored duvetyn for unknown young females."

"So I would infer."

"If you're going to infer I may as well tell you the whole sad tale." Which she did.

"That is rather a wow," Willowdean gave opinion when Derry had finished. "And you haven't seen him since?"

"Once, and then he cut me."

"That's being high-minded and honorable and all that. And incidentally rather boring. But it's strictly in the part. What else would you expect of an earnest young executive?"

"I'd expect he'd be human enough to find an excuse to come around and view his handiwork and say he likes it and it's pretty. After that he can go home to his wife and be goodanappy ever after."

"If he's *the* Tony Landor, I didn't suppose he had a wife."

"Oh, he's got a-nawful one. As awful as she is lawful. She squints and she stutters and she hobbles and she belongs to women's clubs and uplift societies, and makes improving speeches and wears goggles and——"

"That'll be about enough," protested Willowdean. "Where did you meet her?"

"Haven't. But that's the way I'd like her to be, by way of contrast."

"Contrast to what?" demanded Willowdean.

"To me," was the shameless response. "Therefore, just to be mean, she's probably a perfect peach."

"Anyway, that is that," observed the actress, "and we're still moving northward. Me, I've seen Grant's Tomb before."

Derry laughed and pressed the button. Back on the pavement they took a taxi to the Recherché.

CHAPTER VII

AS DERRY and Willowdean preened themselves in the "club's" dressing room, Derry said: "Please satisfy my errant curiosity—how much do you suppose it costs the men to throw this kind of party for us?"

"Anywhere from a hundred to two-fifty," was the careless reply.

"And what do they get in return?"

"Expectations."

"Do you think so? As decent an old boy as Prenny Smith, or——"

"Prenny's different. Well, perhaps they're all different," confessed the other. "I suppose you wouldn't find a decenter lot anywhere than our little wifeless circle. Just the same, men are men. You can't change the sex. Not that I want to."

"If you can't change 'em, you can short-change them," giggled Derry. "And that's what we're doing, isn't it, if we're letting 'em cherish expectations that we never intend——"

"They're getting what they pay for; companionship and fun and the vanity of being envied for being with two of the prettiest girls in New York—not hating ourselves or anything. If they want more, they've always got the privilege of trying. Come on."

The two girls went down to the main floor.

The occupants of the best table on the floor rose to greet them as they entered. With unobtrusive decisiveness Otley maneuvered Derry into the seat next to him. Willowdean, after one quick look around, failing to find Walter Blakely, slipped in between Cole and Preston Smith.

"What's the idea?" demanded the playwright crossly. "You're an hour late."

"Been out for an airing. Don't peeve, Mart. It went well tonight, didn't it?"

"It's going to be a knock-out," predicted Bartram.

"If it is, I'll give a party that you can smell the smoke of for a week afterward."

"Give it anyway. To drown our grief if it's a flop. Mart's roof garden," explained Willowdean to the others, "is the high spot of life in New York."

"High, but far from dry," added little Sara McIntyre. "The honorable Alderman," she turned to Smith, "will get us a special dispensation to disturb the peace all night, won't you, old dear?"

"One of my emoluments as a City Father is the ability to keep my friends out of trouble. I can also get 'em into it, being authorized to perform marriages. Any time you want to get married, come to me."

"If you're looking at me, Prenny dear," twinkled Derry, "I'd like to know whether that's a proposal. Never mind. You're safe from me, even if you weren't married. I love you too well, Prenny-angel, to be your Mrs. Alderman."

"It's very refreshing, Derry," said Martin Cole, "to hear one of you women expressing regard for the safety of the poor male of the species. Usually, one would think that there was only one sex worth considering in the world. I'm sick of it. What about us men?"

"Well, *what* about us?" offered Bartram helpfully. "Get it off your chest."

The playwright promptly did so, adopting an ominous and prophetic mien. "We are in a position of peril. There's a lot of sentimental gush poured out about the danger to young girls left alone in the great and wicked city. Nobody pauses to consider the danger to which unprotected and deserted men are exposed." ("Hear! Hear!" from the masculine representation.) The orator warmed to his theme. "Thrown upon our own resources several months out of every year, when wives decamp in a body for seashore and country—marooned upon this lonely island of Manhattan, long known as the haunt of the most seductive species of sirens, deserted by the lawful partners of our bosoms——"

"Thought you deserted yours, Marty," cut in Sara.

"It was mutual, thank God. I shall write a play about abandoned husbands and call it 'Summer Bachelors.' By Jove, there's an idea."

"With some wide-pants Willie of Broadway as hero."

"No, sir!" Martin Cole's look had changed and deepened to an intent thoughtfulness. "There's more than farce in that idea; there is drama, maybe even tragedy. I'm not going to deal with the cheap and greedy lechers that lurk and peer and prowl in Broadway. They don't matter. It's the other kind that I'm after; the fellows who are accustomed in their own homes to the companionship of intelligent and stimulating women, to the delicacies and refinements and—and—femininities of life," he brought out the word with full eureka effect—"and then have all that side shut off and are left to the dust and silence of deserted houses.

"Slinky words, Marty," commented Mary Bennington, and got a jab from Sara McIntyre's elbow. The playwright was in dead earnest now.

"The loneliness of men like that isn't to be expressed or appeased in terms of lust," he went on. "They're not after the fleshpots of Egypt. Or, if they are, temporarily, that phase is insignificant. The substitute they seek, sooner or later, for home life, is something of the same kind of association, companionship, and, by inevitable development, love. And so they become not only endangered, but dangerous."

"Mr. Cole's play will, then, have a moral to it?" inquired Richard Otley with what seemed to be grave interest.

"No. I don't draw morals. I draw pictures; pictures of life."

But Otley's interest was not enduring, for the next moment he was leaning toward Derry and saying: "Don't you think this is a ghastly waste of good music?"

She rose and slipped into the curve of his arm. They moved out upon the crowded floor, gliding between the couples, under his guidance, with almost uncanny elusiveness.

"Do you know where I'd like to be tonight?" she said dreamily as the scented human heat of the place simmered about them.

Hen Dall

WALLACE IRWIN
finds a funny side
to Every Topic from
Coolidge Economy
to
Follies' Girls
In Next Month's
witty sayings
of Hen Dall
THE GAS MAN

"No. Let's go there."

"Not so easy. I'd like to be sailing straight into the horizon, with a ten-knot breeze abeam and everything set."

"What type of boat do you sail?"

"Sloop mostly. Have you got one waiting at the corner?"

He looked at his watch. "We can be aboard in less than two hours."

"How practical and immediate you sound! Do you keep sloops in stock?"

"On occasion. Will you come?"

"It can't be that the man is serious!"

"Can't it, indeed! Try him."

Derry's eyes crinkled with the inceptive dispersal of her skepticism. "I do believe—— Who else is going?"

"Was that in the wish?"

"Just you and I alone?"

"If I were doing the wishing, instead of only the fulfilling. Are you afraid?" he asked.

"Delightfully. That's what makes it so tempting. But there's always a rate of fare, isn't there; even between here and the horizon? It might be higher than I could afford."

"This isn't a pay-as-you-go trip, Derry," he said quietly.

She thought that over before answering: "You're a poisonously exasperating person, Dick Otley, with your habit of saying things that sound commonplace to the verge of banality until one comes to look at 'em twice. Then I find myself wondering how much more you mean than the words themselves seem to. Anyway, I don't quite see where an attractive and dangerous bachelor like you qualifies in our hand-picked bunch of married men. Who left you on our doorstep?"

"Are you going to throw the waif into the gutter?"

"No, I sorta kinda like you, even if you haven't the proper credentials."

"Like isn't much," he murmured.

"No? You don't want much, do you? What would be?"

"I'll tell you on our voyage."

"There ain't going to be no voyage," she sighed with mock regret.

THROUGHOUT the evening Willowdean had seemed distrait and absent. Setting it down to probable annoyance over Martin Cole's sulkiness, Derry thought little of it. A lover's quarrel which would adjust itself by the inevitable processes of reconciliation, though she sometimes was puzzled over the phases of the relationship between the playwright and the actress, whatever it might be.

"Take me home with you," whispered Willowdean as the party began to break up.

"But it's nearly two o'clock," protested Derry.

"I know it. But I've got to talk or bust."

"Now," said Derry, when they were in her apartment, and had donned negligées, "what's raising your temperature?"

"Martin is acting like the devil."

"He isn't looking so happy."

"He's jealous."

"Of whom?"

"Blackie."

"Walter Blakley! Par l'amour de Mike! Imagine you getting interested in a learned psychological pedagog."

"I'm not. Why shouldn't I?" retorted the other, after which evidence of divided counsels she announced her intention of going to bed, if Derry didn't stop being a swine about it.

"Have you seen him much, lately?"

"Several times."

"How does he wear?"

Willowdean's expression was rueful. "He annoys me."

"Bad sign," said the sage Derry.

"Just as I'm being my most fascinating self with my best little stage allure put on for his benefit, I look up at him and find he's gone off to Mars."

"Safest place for him. It might be Venus."

"Don't be smarty, Derry," pleaded the other wearily.

Derry had a sharp, surprising suspicion. "Have you been seeing him except at rehearsals?"

"No. Yes. Depends on what you mean by rehearsals. I've been up to his laboratory to work on that hypnotic scene."

"Deenie! I'll bet you've been letting him really hypnotize you."

"What if I have?"

"It isn't the safest game in the world."

"What do I care? It can't last long anyway. And you don't have to go under unless you want to. I usually want to," she added dreamily.

"*Deenie!* Are you in love with Walter Blakely?"

The other did not answer directly. "Oh, you needn't be afraid. Whether or not I'm in love with him, he doesn't make love to me. He has never even kissed me, though I've tried several times to make myself specially kissable. You see, I'd made a sort of bet with myself that I'd save his soul from science, and I'm not a bit sure that I'm going to win. But I'd better go to bed if I'm to look my prettiest self for him tomorrow."

"What's up tomorrow?"

"Nothing special. He's taking me out to early dinner and——"

"You don't think that's anything special for Walter Blakely? I'll bet he never did such a thing in his life before he met you."

"I hope not," returned the other with a pretense of demureness.

"Go slow, Deenie." This was further than Derry had ever ventured in direct warning.

"Go to sleep, Derry—and may your dreams be Freudless."

"Better avoid dreams yourself. In your present state of mind they are not safe."

Willowdean only smiled. There were dreams in her smile.

CHAPTER VIII

WALTER BLAKELY'S laboratory suggested the clean austerity of an operating room. It occupied the remote upper corner of an old campus building, at the end of a blind passage. Around the white walls were set recording instruments, revolving stands, reflectors, and a small shelf for reference books. A neatly kept table with an office chair occupied the center. From the further side a door opened into the dark chamber, its walls hung with black and its only furniture an extensible lounge chair for experimental subjects, and some standard instruments for recording pulse movements and blood pressure. Blakely sat tinkering with a complicated bit of mechanism. He looked worn and restless.

A light tap at the door failed to penetrate the fastness of concentration into which he had withdrawn. The tap became a rattle of impatient fingers. When he did open the door Willowdean French addressed him in a severe tone:

"Do you know how long you've kept me waiting?"

"I'm sorry," he said, wearily. "I was busy."

"No!" She feigned stark surprise. "It's incredible. What's that funny gadget?"

"A piece of mechanism I've been putting together all day."

"And most of the night, by your looks. You're ghostly. Come out and play. I've got a car waiting."

He shook his head. "I've been playing too much," he said grimly.

"Then you must have found another little playmate. Why weren't you at the theater last night? Or night before? Or several nights before that? If you won't play with me, you can work with me. When are you going to hypnotize me again?"

"Never again."

"Don't be violent about it. Are you afraid I might draw you into the spell after me and we'd both be lost?"

"Yes, I'm afraid." He spoke as if from another world.

Willowdean's eyes widened and wondered, and pitied, and—perhaps—warned. "Step into my spell, and I'll lay hold of the heels of your soul and drag you off for a long ride in the fresh air. And I'll be awfully sweet to you to make up for interrupting your work."

"I *am* tired," he confessed. "If I could have half an hour more at this——"

"Of course. And I'll putter around quietly, if you don't mind." Presently her voice came to him from the dark chamber.

The Petting Party

He didn't care for her—this slangy, athletic, modern sub-deb who certainly led him on—not he, Gogo Humphrey, with the sophistication of twenty-one and a summer in Paris. But when he found there was only one game in which he excelled, he consented to play it with her—and with most unexpected results!

It's coming next month, this story from the clever pen of

MORRIS GILBERT

"Can you talk, Blackie? I want to ask you something. What's the glass globe with the snaky, gray lines in it?"

"An idea of mine. It's pretty tricky from a scientific viewpoint; I suppose the orthodox would call it quackish. It's a new auto-hypnosis crystal. The inner lines are modeled on the convolutions of the brain."

"But there's a funny, dancy young light in it. How did that get there?"

"Can you see that?" said he alertly. "Not everyone can."

"Clearly. Does that mean that it could hypnotize *me?*"

"It might, under favorable conditions. When you first awoke in the morning, for example, with your will fluid and malleable."

"I'm going to lie down on this fancy rack of yours and try it."

"I wouldn't if I were you. Though it's quite unlikely anything would come of it."

Outside Walter Blakely touched and leveled, adjusted and propped with fingers that were steel for steadiness and silk for softness. He had put a watch on the table; it was soon forgotten. Willowdean was not forgotten; but she was relegated to the back of his brain.

A clock boomed slowly outside. He started; peered at the watch as at some intrusive creature; then got cautiously to his feet. He had been absorbed there nearly an hour! And Willowdean? He called her name. No reply. Had she left in disgust? Oh, of course! The experiment chamber. He pushed the door open.

The girl lay at length upon the adjustable chair-couch, her hands limp at her side, her eyes closed. Her lips were softly curved, softly palpitant to the rhythm of her breathing. Her loveliness had taken on a quality of mystery, of remoteness. Blakely moved forward, trembling, mazed, drawn by a magnetism older, more mysterious, more universal and irresistible than any petty devisement of science.

"Willowdean!" he whispered, "Willowdean!"

He could not see the tender lips quicken, for the door, a silent conspirator, had swung back, closing them together in the quivering darkness; but he heard her deeper breath. She stirred. Her arms widened, lifted, clasped him into a soft encincture of the uttermost bewitchment.

The soft, dark minutes passed on noiseless feet. Once she spoke his name in a music so profound, so beseeching that his heart could have reft from his body to merge with the quick beating of hers.

The clock outside, infinite distances outside, broke into the enchanted stillness with its measured insistence upon time, upon space, upon the realities of life. The woman who was for him the inner self of loveliness stirred. Her hand, soft and icy-cold, crept to his forehead, touched the low lock of hair there with lingering tenderness.

"Will you let me go?" she whispered.

"Must I?" He could hardly speak. He was still stunned, bewildered, dazed with the intoxication of her.

"I have dreamed a lovely dream. If you love me leave it a dream," she said gently. "Let's never spoil it with reality."

"There is no reality, no life, except as you dream it," Blakely said fervently.

"Kiss me and let me go."

So she went away from him. But Walter Blakely, skilled explorer of the human soul, stayed that night, alone and unresponsive to all summons, in the darkness that she had dowered with her love.

CHAPTER IX

DERRY THOMAS opened her office door and stopped short.

"You!" she exclaimed, and was instantly sorry that she had said it in exactly that tone.

Anthony Landor got out of his chair. "Miss Thomas?" he said in a tone of impersonal inquiry.

As Derry went to her desk she saw no lurking evidence of laughter about him. So she admitted that she was Miss Thomas.

"I have been waiting an hour," he said, "and have telephoned four times."

"Your business" (with a slight emphasis on the word) "must be important."

"It is. We wish to obtain an authentic autograph of Charles Y. Mowbray, who was acting-mayor of New York in 1873, for a few weeks. You accept such commissions, I understand. I am A. N. Landor, of the Surety Life Company."

She regarded him with eyes in which amusement, resentment, and pleasure were vaguely blended. "The youngest high executive in New York," she supplemented glibly, "if one may believe the biographical—or is it autobiographical sketches?"

"One can't," he averred hastily. Derry grinned an inner grin; the armor was not so impenetrable! "Do you think you can get the signature for us? We must have it within a month. And the matter is necessarily private."

"I am discretion itself," said Derry. "In business matters," she added as if on afterthought, and caught a quivering of his eyebrows as she bent to make an entry on her calendar.

"Then I shall expect to hear from you soon." He took up his stick and gloves.

Was he going? Dismay surged within Derry's soul, and with it righteous wrath. What did the man mean by acting this way?

"Do you mind telling me how you found this place, Mr. Landor? We like to trace our channels of business."

"Through Walter Blakely. He is a mine of information about New York. At my request he gave me a list of concerns which might handle such matters, and, as he said that he knew some one at Ostrander's, I came here first."

"Do you mean to say you didn't really know it was me?"

"There are so many Thomases in New York," he pointed out.

Derry stamped, which was unbusinesslike, and elicited a look of grave surprise from the visitor. "Oh, do be human and answer my question."

"How human am I permitted to be?" Anyway, he was smiling now. She liked his smile. She like it a lot.

"As human as you like."

"As human as on the bus top?"

Now that he had got started he was certainly going fast enough; a bit too fast, perhaps. Very well; she would give him a little jolt. "If that's your way of claiming payment."

"Payment?" he repeated. "Are you in my debt?"

"Don't you regard me as being?"

Her tone stung a clear flush into the weathered brown of his skin. "Are you actually concerned about that innocent escapade of the store?" he asked.

"If I were, what then?"

"I'd send you a statement of the amount, at once."

"I won't pay it," she declared, "until I get good and ready. What are you doing next?"

"Putting it in the hands of a collection agency is the usual procedure with bad debts." He looked quite relievingly boyish when he grinned that way. Derry took instant and daring resolution.

"I didn't mean about the debt. I meant what are you doing now?"

"Oh! Going back downtown. Why?"

"Sometimes we invite good customers out to luncheon, purely as a matter of business, of course."

"Yes; I know those business invitations. They always get into the bill, somehow. Therefore suppose you lunch with me."

"That was the intention all the time," stated Derry, with calm frankness, "though it took a good deal of pressure to put it over. But are you allowed to dispense meals to casual business women?"

"Allowed?" He was frankly puzzled.

"Then I suppose Mrs. Landor isn't so old-fashioned as to object."

His face crinkled, lightened, cleared. "Oh, well, you see, she isn't in town."

"The mousie's carnival! Cat, yourself Derry!" chuckled the girl. "What would she say if she knew about the dress?"

Then Derry got *her* jolt. "She does."

"You *told* her?"

"Certainly."

"I don't believe—— What did she say?"

"She laughed." It occurred to Derry that he was laughing also, which did not please her. Further there was something in his amusement which she failed to understand. Against her better judgment she asked:

"Was that your wife with you when I saw you at the Recherché?"

"Did you see me at the Recherché?" He gave the impression of striving conscientiously to summon memory to his aid. Pig again! Double pig!

"And was that the reason you didn't ask me to dance with you?"

"It would have been a violation of the bargain. I'm an honorable gent. Strictly."

"Is this luncheon thing in accordance with the bargain?"

"You started it."

"I have to start everything," complained Derry ruefully. "Otherwise it would never get a start."

"I know I'm slow," he admitted as they left the office. "Lack of experience. I've never had much time for—for this sort of thing. This much I will admit, now that business is over. There was a personal element in my coming to you, though it was mostly chance. If I come again, it will be by choice. No chance in it."

"But I still don't see how you connected me with myself."

"I made a few discreet inquiries, that night at the dancing club."

"Was that in the bargain, oh strictly honorable gent?"

"Why not? I never undertook to lose interest in you—a purely artistic interest, of course. I undertook only not to presume on it."

"As a non-presumer you wear plumes!"

The luncheon was skillfully ordered, but not leisurely enough for Derry. After it was over—what? "Back to the grind for the honest working girl," she sighed rather elaborately.

He hesitated. "Do you have to go back?"

"You've clothed me and fed me. What more can the poor girl expect?"

"The Yankees are playing the Red Sox this afternoon."

"Crash! goes the good old resolution. You've ruined my career for the day."

He looked doubtful. "But you may not be willing to go as I do, as a simple low-down rooter in the bleachers."

"You? Oh, I see. You go in for the full flavor of the thing. But"—she ran a disparaging eye over the obviously Fifth-Avenue-tailored figure — "you're much too elegant. They'd throw you out."

"All men look alike in their shirt-sleeves."

"Tell me what to do and I'll be a model of bleacher etiquette."

"To be quite in the mode, you should sit with your shoulder pressing against mine and hug me unaffectedly when the home team makes a run, and know all the players by their nicknames and invent new and devastating words for the impure umpire——"

"Impure umpire is grand! Let's go!"

To Derry it was a memorable afternoon, one of those brief, rare intervals in the level of existence which are never found by seeking, but come as the blessed gift of chance to two attuned personalities. During the course of the game Landor laid several little bets of a dime or a quarter with Derry. She lost a dollar and forty cents, payment of which he accepted with gravity.

"That's just the very gayest afternoon I've had since I crashed through my shell," said she as they jostled their way through the high-humored mass.

He did not suggest their repeating it. On the way back he was rather silent. The boyish gayety seemed to have died out of him. Ever adaptable, Derry did not try to make talk. At the office, whither she elected to return before going home, he said abruptly:

"I've always thought this fate thing a stuffed shirt."

"Well?" she inquired. "Has some one been removing the stuffing?"

It was an indirect if not inadequate answer for him to say: "I told myself that I wouldn't lift a finger to see you again."

"I don't come to lifted fingers," said Derry calmly.

"You don't have to tell me that," he answered with profound conviction. "Not that that's what I meant, as you know well enough."

"Well, didn't you want to see me again—ever?"

"I wanted to too much. The purely artistic interest was a pretty idea, but it didn't quite prove up. So I stopped going to the Recherché."

"So I noticed." Derry bit her lip. That had slipped. But he took no heed of it.

"Then this business of Mowbray's signature brings me bang up against you. What do you call that?"

"Luck. Good luck, if you want me to be flattering."

"I don't. We've agreed to call it chance, thus far. And now that we've got to the point of choice——"

"Whose choice? I've got a choice in the matter, too," she reminded him. "Suppose I didn't want you to come back. Wouldn't it be much saner for both of us if I just settled up that old account and thanked you for a day—such a corker of a day, Tony Landor!—and quit all even?"

"No. Not yet."

She abandoned her bantering tone: "If ever I do pay that debt, it will mean something."

"What?"

"That'll be for you to find out."

"Won't you give me a hint?"

She shook her head. "I don't know myself. But I've a deep-dyed hunch it will be something special. If it ever comes off, which it probably won't."

"Things don't usually," he confirmed. "Life's an anti-climax, anyway. It has to be, except in books. Books are different; you can make 'em stop where you want 'em to." He held out his hand. "Good-by," he said abruptly.

It was on Derry's lips to ask when she would see him again, but she choked it. After all, she couldn't make all the advances. Distinctly it was his move.

And, as distinctly, he thereafter remained motionless. A week passed; ten days. She mailed the Mowbray signature. A letter from Landor's secretary acknowledged receipt, "in Mr. Landor's absence." Well . . . perhaps he *was* absent. Or perhaps he wasn't. No word.

Derry forgot him. Determinedly.

OTLEY'S invitation to go sailing plagued Derry. He had contrived to invest it with a quality of the inevitable. Something in his courteous non-insistence had predicted: "You'll accept." Or was it something within herself? Preston Smith called her a tiddler. She didn't know what it meant, but it sounded unpleasantly as if it might be true. By the way, he was taking her to luncheon next day. Why not talk it over with him?

"Prenny, would you go on a sailing party with Dick Otley?"

"Is he getting one up?"

"Yes. Especially for me," she smiled.

"Who's the rest of the party?"

"There isn't any rest—for the wicked." And she told of the invitation.

Smith set down his cocktail. "No, you don't, Derry. You want me to say that you mustn't on any account go, whereupon you will go, and then you'll blame me afterward for making you go by telling you that you mustn't."

"You know too much about me," Derry complained. "It isn't decent to have one's inner self shown up that way. I don't like being a naked soul."

"And you haven't liked being a starved one," he interpreted further. "Just at present I should say that your appetite is slightly abnormal, due to long deprivation of the good things of life. But there are *some* things that little Eve mustn't eat."

"If I decide to eat as I wish," returned rebellious Derry, "why not? I'm responsible to nobody in the world for what I do. I'm my own boss."

"Better stay so," was his crisp counsel.

"I get you. As a moralist you're a highly impressive person, Prenny."

"But I'm quite serious about this. There are women who can play the other game and square things with themselves. Your tradition is against you."

She frowned. "What do you know about my tradition?"

"It sticks out all over you. You were brought up in a nineteenth century atmosphere of breeding and behavior and responsibility, and for a woman that sort of tradition is the strongest and most enduring of influences. When you lost your money and your natural place in the world—I don't know where it was, but it's perfectly clear *what* it was—you took a grouch on things, and now that you've come back into the light, you think you'd like to kick the slats out of the conventionalities by way of getting even. You can't safely do it, because the ingrained part of your nature would rebel and chafe and shame you into wretchedness."

Her lower lip went out. "I probably will do it, if I ever meet a man I care enough for to—to make it worth while."

"Then you'll marry him."

"I won't. I've got a permanent hate on marriage."

"Yes. Willowdean has told me something about that. Just the same, we're going to marry you off as soon as we find somebody who can handle you."

"Go as far as you like," mocked the girl. "Drug me and put me through it painlessly—if you can catch me," she continued. "I give you full permission. But it takes two to make a wedding. And I don't know where you're going to find the other party among my summer bachelors, all carefully hand-picked and married."

"Except Otley," he remarked.

"Don't tell me he's your candidate! I thought you didn't like him. Willowdean says *she* believes I could snare him into the fatal compact, if I wanted to."

"If you'll tell me you're in love with him——"

"I'm not. But I've got a queer, vulgarly curious streak of primal woman in me that might make me marry a man like Dick Otley just to find out what the darn thing is like."

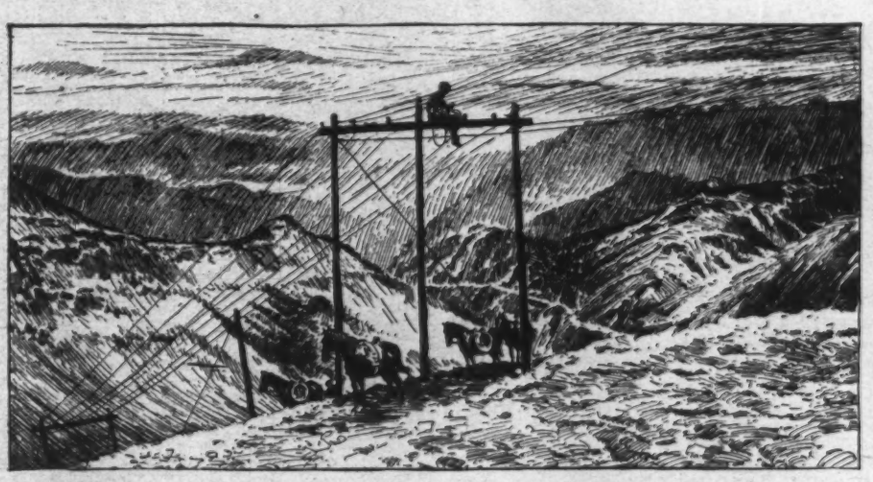
"There's something about the chap——"

"I know," she nodded her pretty head with brisk sagacity. "Something that one doesn't know about—because he doesn't want one to, I think. That adds to the interest. But I don't think I'll go to sea to find out. If I do, I'll be on my defense, Prenny."

"I'll add to it," he replied enigmatically, and turned to other subjects.

In the morning came a reminder of

Telephone line over the Rocky Mountains



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his promise, a box of flowers containing a small, cold, heavy parcel. Foreknowing what it was she unwrapped and regarded the silver mounted revolver thoughtfully. Did Prenny take it as seriously as all that? In that case——

"I'm not seriously meditating a voyage on the perilous seas with Dick Otley or anyone else in sight," she wrote Prenny. "It's funny of you and it's dear of you, and you are a funny dear, anyway, but principally a dear. If I do go, I'll take the cannon. But I haven't really any intention of going."

Nor had she. And it really wasn't Derry's fault that she did go. It was seldom Derry's fault that she did anything she ought not to do!

On this particular afternoon it was so hot and muggy—and Bev Greenway had broken an engagement—and Prenny Smith wasn't at *any* of his clubs when she called—and furthermore, Anthony Landor had given neither sign nor evidence of being in the same world with her—and it must have been chance, or fate, or something that set Otley to telephoning at precisely the right or wrong moment—and here she was with the tiller of a forty-footer in her hand while the small urgent waves of the Sound stroked the sloop's flanks, caressing her forth into the open.

"It's too marvelous!" she breathed. "And you're a marvel, too, Dick, to sit there without a word and let me breathe it in. Where shall I steer for?"

He pointed to a lighthouse, vaguely showing near the south coast horizon. "Try that."

"What a delightful craft! I want to look around her."

Otley took the helm. Presently the girl reappeared from below.

"I've never *seen* anything so complete and comfortable. Is she yours?"

"She's yours for as long as you'll captain her."

"Why, you could almost go to Europe in her!" Derry said incautiously.

"Are those the orders?"

"Would you take me?"

He only smiled.

"I believe you would! What would be the chances of our getting across alive?"

"At this season?" He reckoned thoughtfully. "About fifty-fifty."

"And you'd take that chance?"

He smiled again. Then she knew that he would. A queer, wavery wildness came over her to loose the sheet, and let the great swelling breast of the sail have its fill of the soft breeze. She knew what the answer would be! He would pay off the helm and they would be on the trackless flood to the open Atlantic. And if they didn't come back? For the mad moment Derry thought—if she could be sure that they never would come back—she would go. She wanted to go! And in that realization a depressive fear swept over her. She thought aloud: "I wonder what the devil I'm doing here, anyway?"

"Nothing very terrible," he answered her. "Will you take her again, or shall I sail?"

"I will." They exchanged places. "It strikes me as about the most reckless performance on the calendar."

"Does it?" he commented in his non-committal way.

"Yes, it does. I don't really trust you."

"And I could find it difficult to trust myself when I'm with you."

His voice was quite cool and matter-of-fact; his manner quiet and gentle. Nevertheless, Derry somehow thought of Prenny Smith's gift.

"I'm delightfully cooled off now," she said. "Let's go back."

"Let's go on," he answered.

"Where to?"

"Europe—or not. What does it matter?"

"I've got an important date tomorrow that Europe might interfere with," she answered with valiant lightness. "Homeward bound is the order."

"Think you can find your way back?"

She turned to study the shore, a line grown strangely distant, strangely altered.

Ahead a terrific metal scream shattered the silence.

"That steamer would rather we didn't run her down," interpreted Otley. Although the emergency was urgent, he made no effort to seize command of the situation.

Recalled to her immediate responsibilities with a start, Derry jammed the helm hard down. A big, black-flanked, coastwise steamer was bearing down upon them.

The sail swung and slatted. There was a long-drawn swu-u-ssh of waters, a turmoil of crosswaves and under-suctions!

The sloop plunged and wriggled, finally settling down as Otley clewed the sheet in.

"Poor stuff by me," remarked Derry a bit breathlessly.

"Staging a double suicide?" he queried.

"Just a plain case of rattles."

"Suicide," he repeated slowly, thoughtfully. "Or threat? Or murder? I believe there's nothing you'd stop at, Derry. Therefore——"

She went stiff all over as his arm caught her in a grip of relentless muscles, bending her back until his still, hard, smiling face was close above hers.

"You're hurting me, Dick," she said gently, beseechingly.

His hand went to the bosom of her jacket, pressed there for a moment. He laughed. At that laughter the girl did not know whether to be relieved or frightened; nor at his self-confirming "I thought so."

"Thought what?"

"That you'd carry defensive armament. If you hadn't, I should have been annoyed—at my own mis-reading of your character. If you will pardon the apparent informality——" He plucked out and held up the small, deadly thing, eyeing it curiously. "If it's to be a case of force and arms," he observed, "where do you stand now?"

NEXT MONTH

More than one surprise is in store for Derry from Dick Otley; and in the next instalment Willowdean's summer flirtation threatens tragic consequences. As Martin Cole's extravagant roof party in celebration of the success of his new play, matters reach a crisis in the affairs of both girls.

Hildegarde for Luck—Continued from page 20

enthusiastically. "Come on—get in!"

"Well, if you think I'm not game!" And there she sat, the darling, in Hildegarde's lap. "Did you do it yourself?"

"Every bit. She's mine."

"Even the slip-covers?"

Mrs. Krehl had worked herself into a frenzy with cretonne and upholstering tacks. Ray confessed that a woman he knew had helped him. "Why don't you tell her it was your landlady?" he said to himself. "Why don't you tell her you're living in a boarding-house?"

"I read in the papers," said Bernadine, "that you had a wreck the night before I left. Was your father angry? You said he had an awful temper."

"He was," said Ray. "That's why I bought my own car."

Evading again! He was afraid to tell Bernadine anything. Bernadine leaned over Hildegarde's side and contemplated a blue fender.

"What will the bunch say?" she marveled.

"What bunch?"

"Out at the club?"

"I thought of a different place for dinner. I know a place way out in the country where they serve wonderful chicken and——" he began to talk very fast, pleading earnestly the cause of a farmer family that had seen bad luck that year, losing stock in lightning and so on. The wife and the daughters were serving meals to the public now, wonderful rolls and pies and home-made preserves and like that! At the close of his philanthropic oration he turned a becomingly anxious face to Bernadine.

"I think it will be jolly," said she. That was one of the things about Bernadine. Just when you began to think she was a careless, heartless, light-minded kid, she would turn suddenly so kind and sweet that you lost your balance entirely. Whereupon, of course, she would flash back to nonsense again. "We'll have dinner there and drop in at the club later. I'd perish with disappointment if the crowd didn't see this! What's the good of a lark if nobody's looking?"

"They're looking all right!"

"But our crowd!"

Ray promised to stop at the club on their way home. He promised uncomfortably because of his conscience.

"You're stalling," chided the conscience. "Tell her the truth, that you can't afford to go to the club, that you haven't the

Fine Pores Make Fine Skins

Will she "live happily ever after?"

RADIANT, starry eyed, she looks inquiringly to the future. Will her rosy dreams come true? Will *he* love her always? Will he be as proud of her five years hence?

Who can tell? It depends so much on her—on her tact, her loyalty, but most of all, her skill in retaining her vibrant, youthful loveliness. For it is only too true—love often fades as beauty fades.

Don't let happiness flit out of your hands. Whether you are a bride of the past or present—or one for future years—make up your mind now to be and *stay* as beautiful as *he* would have you. Make up your mind to keep your skin always fresh and youthful—always satiny-soft and fine-textured as that of the youngest bride. It's all a matter of proper care—care that will refine the pores and keep them normally invisible. For, as you know, *fine pores make fine skins.*

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club privileges, that you don't belong to the crowd any more. Don't be a sneak."

But he couldn't bear to take any risks on this, his first evening alone with Bernadine. Long-winded explanations about parental misunderstandings and poverty were out of tune. This evening—why, this evening might mean that Bernardine would like him, or not like him, forever and ever. He loved Bernadine. Not arguments, but words of love kept crowding up into his throat in such numbers that he felt choked and could say nothing. The ride was pretty quiet. But when Bernadine sat opposite him at a table, putting plum preserves on her thumb and a bit of roll at the same time, he had to speak.

"Bernadine, I'm awfully in love with you."

"That's nice," said Bernadine, beaming—but he couldn't be sure it was not over her ecstatic mouthful.

"Bernadine, do you like me—just a little?"

"Um-huh, a little," teased Bernadine, eyes dancing.

"Bernadine, I'm mad about you! You're the only girl in the world for me ever! Things are sort of against me now, but if you like me, just a little——"

"Hm!" said Bernadine. "Don't be hasty, Mr. Graves!"

"Ray!"

"Don't be hasty, Ray!"

"Hasty!" Ray thought of four weeks past, empty, save for the slight palliation of Hildegarde. He thought of time ahead like Mount Everest, insurmountable, and groaned. "Hasty!"

"You've seen me only twice!"

"Once was enough."

"You don't know me really. My father says: 'God pity the young man who ever thinks he wants to take care of you!' "

"Oh, fathers!"

"They pay the bills."

"Bills! I want to know if you care for me—any."

"You won't be sensible?" Couldn't the boy catch the breathlessness of her chatter? "Then I must be. I won't tell you—until the end of summer."

He couldn't make her tell. Suddenly the evening was gone, his part of it. He had to keep his promise to show Hildegarde to the club crowd. Would that entail dramatic revelations?

No. In this scene he became personally quite obscure. Hildegarde was received with shouts of approval, Bernadine with her usual welcome—and both were taken from him. Everyone must have a ride in Hildegarde. Everyone must have a dance with Bernadine. He had only a moment at her door for goodbye. Hildegarde still throbbed at the curb under a load of ruthless passengers.

"I'll see you soon," he whispered in Bernadine's ear. "Soon!"

"You'd better!" murmured Bernadine, gave him a quick pressure of her hands, slipped instantly from his grasp, and was gone.

That night made a gladness for Ray, with a humming and a whistling, *sotto voce* out of respect for Mrs. Krehl. "Oh, I've a chance, a chance!" But the next morning made a sadness. His pockets were quite, quite empty. One evening with Bernadine and he was without funds to continue. Pay-day way off! Where had the money gone? There was the purchase price of Hildegarde and her make-up. Good girl, if she were considered a joke! Aside from that there had been a simple little dinner, tips, gasoline on the road home, toasts to be drunk to Hildegarde at a half dozen soda fountains—he, of course, paying for the drinks as he had always done, weakly, lacking the strength to break off old ways with a declaration of bankruptcy. It wasn't that he minded so much saying he'd been thrown out, as he minded having this seem to have crippled him in any respect. Silly boy!

But then, he had had Bernadine beside him, sweet, sweet in precious moments. He could still feel her hands in his, her soft cheek under his whispering lips: "See you soon!"

HOW could he see her soon? Why, if he telephoned to her daily, he must walk to work one way and go without his lunch. That he should neglect her was, however, unthinkable. The brief hour with the old crowd had proved to him that he must fight for Bernadine every inch of the way. That he should go to see Bernadine with flat pockets was equally unthinkable. Bernadine was exotic, expensive. Doggone it, he liked her that way. He didn't want her to be sensible, demure, supervirtuous. She wouldn't be Bernadine. He loved her. He'd never be able to love another kind of girl any more than he'd ever be entirely satisfied with Mrs. Krehl's plain, hearty meals. Sermons, advice to the contrary, he was himself and Bernadine was—Bernadine—God bless her!

So, the most unthinkable thing of all was that he should give up and count her lost. Then what to do? He had his choice between flat dates, frequent, while they lasted, and scattered ones with means for entertainment and tribute. Still true to Bernadine, he chose the latter course.

Quite bravely over the telephone that noon hour he said to Bernadine: "I want to see you soon, but I haven't a cent to my name. I'm broke."

"Broke?" said Bernadine.

"Flat, busted! And I won't have any money for two more weeks. Could you, would you make a date with me two weeks from to-morrow—Sunday?"

"Two weeks from to-morrow?" Her tone implied that if such was his idea of soon—— Ray's heart leaped up and fell down in his helplessness. "Because you won't have any money—well—in that case maybe you'd better wait another two weeks and you'd have still more?"

Cool impudence rising above a hurt. Ray's face burned in a flush of angry disappointment. He'd been through such a lot getting to this telephone declaration. Almost he said something furious into the instrument. But he caught himself. For the first time in his life he weighed a word before he spoke it, remembering how hasty words, anger, had put him where he was now.

"Bernadine!" Just a cry of distress, such as a telephone booth could hardly accommodate.

"Ye-e-es!" She was still there!

"Bernadine, I want to see you to-morrow, to-day, every day. But I can't for two weeks. I tell you, I'm broke—penniless. I'll explain everything when I see you. I meant to last night, but there was so much else to talk about. Please give me Sunday, two weeks from to-morrow. I thought we could go canoeing."

"Well, maybe," said Bernadine.

Made a sadness, indeed. A lugubriousness. Mrs. Krehl discovered that he rose early and walked to work breakfastless and forced him to accept a loan of carfare and lunch money. That made him more comfortable in body, but did not lift his spirits. She asked him why he did not ride in Hildegarde, and he explained that Hildegarde could not be driven among a lot of low-brow automobile mechanics.

"So?" said Mrs. Krehl. "Everything is only for that girl: I told you so. See how you don't whistle no more! She ain't worth it."

"She is!" declared Ray, teeth set. "She's the only girl in the world."

"So? Well, it don't do no good to get long in the face over it. Maybe soon you get a raise on your job. So slick you are with automobiles!"

"Soon!" Ray groaned at the associations aroused by that monosyllable.

But, even at the age of twenty-three, two weeks will pass if you give them time. On a Sunday morning Hildegarde, fresh and rosy as the dawn itself, carried Ray and Bernadine over the roads to a place on the river where Ray could hire a canoe and detach the girl from shore and her too numerous acquaintances. And on a calm stretch of water Ray put aside all other subjects to tell Bernadine about his break with his father.

"I knew about that, of course," said Bernadine lightly. "Everybody knows."

"You didn't seem to understand when I told you I was broke!"

"I didn't understand why you didn't want to see me, but you were perfectly right. Being rich or poor doesn't change people—I mean, what they like best. I never could like just to sit around. I'm awfully glad you waited."

"Bernadine, are you being nice or are you perfectly heartless?"

"Uh-huh!" said Bernadine, with a sudden shy, soft look in her eyes.

"You darling!"

"Raymond Graves, will you remember that you are in a canoe?"

"I'm always somewhere," groaned Ray.

Nevertheless, he had to pay heavy excess for overtime in the canoe. And storage on Hildegarde. Also there had been a festive luncheon at a new lodge, downstream.

"But, honey, all that matters is that I'm with you," said Ray after the last expenditure, turning from Hildegarde's wheel to hug Bernadine.

Bernadine pushed his arms away or made such a motion. Such ridiculous little hands!

"Are you broke again?" she asked suspiciously.

"Almost. But that doesn't matter!"

"Of course it matters. How can you make love to a girl when you can't make a date more than once in two weeks?"

She looked at him pertly, defiantly. A second before, Ray had thought he was surely going to kiss her. Now discour-

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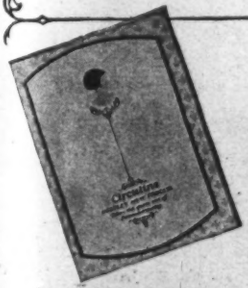

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agement swooped down suddenly, smothering his desire. His arms relaxed. He kicked Hildegarde.

"I suppose you're right," he said. "I guess I'm the kind of fool dad said. Anyhow, it's plain you don't feel the way I do!"

"Is it?" said Bernadine.

"Oh, Bernadine, have a heart!"

Heavy silence enveloped Hildegarde, thoughtful, throbbing silence. Bernadine fidgeted.

"Ray?"

Ray's heart leaped. His face came alive, eager with anticipation.

"I'm thirsty."

"Oh!"

He stopped Hildegarde at the next soda fountain.

"I've just sixty-five cents to my name," he warned.

"I want a peach melba," said Bernadine.

All the young world knows that peach melbas cost thirty-five cents at the cheapest stands. Politely, but with an air of painful meditation, Ray ordered plain soda for himself.

"I adore peach melbas," sighed Bernadine. "Don't you?"

"I can't afford two peach melbas!" said Ray. "Bernadine, what I've been trying to make clear to you is that I'm poor, downright poor. I haven't a cent, and probably never will have a cent, except what I earn with my own hands. I'm in love with you. I met you first as the son of a rich man. I fell in love with you that way. Being poor hasn't changed my feelings, but how about you? I can't go on seeing you unless you accept my position as a poor man; unless you understand."

"But I do understand," protested Bernadine.

"You don't appear to!" said Ray, growling at the dish of costly sweets.

"Because I ordered this? But I wanted a peach melba. I'll pay for it."

"You will not!"

"And if you're so grouchy at me because I like such things, why do you think you're in love with me?"

"Oh, damn!"

But on the last lap of the homeward journey, Ray made a final attack.

"Bernardine, I do love you. Couldn't you learn to love a poor man?"

"Mercy, no," said Bernadine. "I wouldn't think of such a thing."

Then, why did she seem to nestle against Hildegarde's lean cushions? And why should her mouth turn up wistfully at the corners, as her eyes watched Ray's absurdly stern profile?

"I suppose this is good-bye," said he, ponderously, at her door. Behind the clematis trellis.

"Good-bye!" sighed Bernadine.

Whereupon the boy turned savage all in a minute and caught her up in ruthless, greedy arms, and kissed her madly—for remembrance. For in another minute his arms let go. She was so sweet, so soft, so fragrant, so light in his grasp!

It was as if he had thought to crush in his hands a cluster of her favorite orchids.

From the shadow of an inner stairway came his dismissal, spoken softly, but with great finality.

"Even if I did love you, I wouldn't ever consent to marry a poor man!"

"Oh, Bernadine, I'll work hard——"

From farther up the stairway: "But I wouldn't wait a long, long time either, until we both got old. That would be too poky!"

Now he was alone. Great waves of feeling, which he thought was anger, rolled over him. His face burned, his throat swelled, his heart pounded. He clenched his fists. If there were only some one or something about that deserved a thrashing! He must do some violence with that force that threatened to consume him. Mutely, rosily, Hildegarde alone waited for him at the curb. He cursed her cruelly, black words defiling his young lips. He said he was through with her, too. But he'd smash her first. He'd take her out and run her into a wall, turn her back to the scrap-heap from which in madness he had first picked her.

With every intention of bringing to a bad end Hildegarde and himself, he opened the throttle to its widest extent. The streets were filled with homeward-bound holiday-makers. The roads beyond the city limits were also congested. Had he been driving a valuable motor of his father's, there would have been an emergency, a ditch, a wall, a wreck, in no time. Hildegarde went through every crisis unscathed. Some of Ray's numb fury of frustation was lost in his wonder at her demoniac performance. The pink dickens! She ran, she ducked, she scuttled like a fox.

Then, all at once, he knew that he was being pursued. Not for the first time in his life did he sense a motor-cycle throbbing in his wake. With a laugh that held amusement, in spite of his wish to make it thwarted villainy, he tried to push the old girl still faster. But Hildegarde was through. With a sigh, a little moan of exhaustion, she swooned, stopped. Her gasoline tank was empty. Ray turned to face the law.

He met tribute and exasperation on the sweating face of a civilian about his own age, a young man distinguished chiefly by a bold, aggressive nose, who straddled a bike almost as tired as Hildegarde.

"Say!" said the stranger. "I never saw a flivver run like that and I thought I knew them! I've been trying to catch you for half an hour. I'd heard about this pink car. I wanted to speak to you about it. Think I was the police?"

He handed Ray a business card, which listed such a bewilderment of activities that Ray could make nothing of it. The man described himself as a promoter, meaning that he had an ingenious brain which thought of more schemes than the one physical man could carry into accomplishment. He had heard of the pink car two weeks before and immediately had been hit by an idea. He'd watched for it ever since and had almost come to believe he'd been deceived, when Ray had darted ahead of him on the old North Road.

"I want to know who did that job," said this man, a Mr. Waite from Connecticut, and indicated Hildegarde.

"I painted her," confessed Ray.

"Why, man, you're a genius!"

"Oh, come off!" Ray knew himself to-day for just a young fool.

"I mean it. I want to talk business with you. I always keep my eye open for new ideas. Now, I've got a garage out this way, where I do quite a business in second-hand cars. People from the suburbs, without any too much money, working men on jobs, students who want to make a hit with girls. And it just struck me, watching you in this car, that if I could fix up these wrecks a little fancy, I'd double my trade and my profits, too."

"Do you mean to say that anybody in the world would want to parade around in a sky-blue pink contraption like this?"

"Well, not exactly sky-blue pink. That is a little extreme. But there are other colors. You've got the snappy young idea, that's what I mean. You wouldn't believe what a call I have for sport models. The engine isn't nearly as important as the peppy appearance. Of course, if you're tied to a good job——"

"I'm tied to nothing," said Ray, holding fast to Hildegarde's wheel to steady himself. "What's your proposition?"

ON a keen October day Raymond Graves sat in his father's office beside his father's desk and faced his father over a thousand dollar check, the first installment of the son's debt. And his father had made him a proposition, too.

"You're thin," grumbled the older Graves, looking at his son yearningly, as if over a separation of years, a separation that had tasted of bereavement.

"Working hard," said Ray. "You're thin yourself. Off your feed."

He looked at his father as if he had never seen him before. Loneliness of his own had taught him sympathy for the grizzled, lonely man at the handsome desk. Sympathy had kept him from shouting "No" to his father's proposition. His father had kept track of him all these months, never meaning to let real disaster come to the son. His father said he was tickled, pleased, proud, because of the boy's riotous success in business: The Modern Garage, Specialty, Remodeling Old Cars. It had been a great stunt, but now his father wanted him in his own place. He offered him the problem of the disposing of used cars that came in on trades; one of the worst problems of the automobile man. Ray had been tempted to refuse. Youth, pride, exultation in his victory urged him to make a gesture. There was sympathy, a drawing toward the old man, on the other side of the balance; and that side weighed the heavier in the end. Ray said he would have a try at the job if his father thought him equal to the trust and if he could make arrangements with Mr. Waite.

The father took the son to lunch with him.

"You know," he said shyly in the course of a terrific meal, "being a father is a problem in itself. I've—missed you like the dickens. Even got a little lonesome for a row or two. I—but I can't help thinking that cutting you off temporarily, putting you on your own, has been good for you."

"You're right in a way," said the son. "But you can't have all the credit. There are two others. First, there's Bernadine. Bernadine's my girl. I met her the night you showed me the door. She's a queen, and she wouldn't have anything to do with me poor. I either had to quit or I

had to make good. Right away, too!"

"You're very young," said his father, not too pleased to meet Bernadine.

"And there's Hildegarde," said Ray quickly.

Mr. Graves shouted over Hildegarde. He said the work on her proved that Ray had his father's ability! Then he returned to this matter of Bernadine. Was Ray engaged to her?

"I don't know," said Ray. "I'll tell you this evening."

He got Bernadine on the telephone. He couldn't make out whether she was glad or startled or what to hear from him.

He had to be content to know that she would be at home that afternoon and would receive him.

On the way to her house he composed quite an oration. Almost a homily. His meeting with his father had opened a vein of sentiment. He was going to say magnanimously to Bernadine that she had been the making of him; that her seeming cruelty had been the goad that had lashed him to great endeavors; her refusal to be satisfied with anything less than the best the world offered in everything had fired him with—with—with——

Alas for metaphors! The scene was done in pantomime. There was a street door opened by a silent maid. Beyond that was a wide door into a sort of velvet room in which Bernadine, poised on tip toe, waited. Instantly she was in his arms, and there was such perfect understanding on both sides this time that there she stayed. When words came, it was Ray who had been cruel to run away and stay away so long!

"Now, sweetheart, how could I help myself?"

"I didn't mean a word I said, beautiful!"

"Well, it's a blessing for both of us I didn't know that."

"You—you aren't poor any more?" There was acute disappointment in the tear-drenched voice. The child had made up her mind to some dreadful ordeal and was loth to relinquish the rôle of martyr.

"Poor?" Ray shouted in a way Mrs. Krehl would have liked to hear. "Me? I've got two jobs, a share in a business, a—why, I'm a millionaire. I've got you!"

"And I haven't eaten a peach melba since that day!" wailed Bernadine.

"Precious! Well, come out now and eat two!"

Bernadine pulled back.

"I'll bet you've brought a grand, expensive car again because I was such a selfish pig."

"I'll show you," said Ray.

There at the curb stood Hildegarde, spick and span and pink. She hadn't been out either since that day. Never did wood and tin and steel receive such adoration.

"We'll keep her always," said Bernadine.

"Will we? We'll mount her in the front hall. She's our horseshoe."

"We'll—Ray, we'll take her on our honeymoon!"

"Hildegarde!" Ray spoke in awe, a hushing hand on Hildegarde's gently palpitating side. "Did you hear that?"

"A-choo!" said Hildegarde.

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The Gas Man—Continued from page 27

a hunk. These are desprit times, Mrs. Wills, desprit. If you won't tell on me I'll give ya a news item that'll turn yer hair inta a permanent wave. Ya know them chain drug stores, always being stuck up by them masked fellas that can play 'The Prisoner's Song' on a cash register? Well, them chain drug stores has thoughta sompn. They've sent around to the American Legion and hired a lotta machine-gunners to be soda clerks. Ya wouldn't think it, wouldya, looking at all them quiet lads shaking up malted milk? But thassa fact. And every time a bobbed-haired girl comes in, seven Browning guns disguised as egg-shakers is leveled at 'er eyebrow. Of course she might be jest you or me. But chances are she's captain of the famous Nut Sundae Gang that looted Fleigenblatter's news-stand last week for a hundred thousand berries.

"Here's sompn I wanna tell Japonica, if she'll ever let me talk. I wanna tell 'er that this here crime wave is a female. Lookit the way all them rich young debutanties has got pockets sewed into their —well, Mrs. Wills, they never usta carry gin that way! And this here war-dance they call the Charleston. When I was a lad and usta come home from a fancy ball with a beefsteak on me eye, I could tell the folks how the other fella looked. But where's yer come-back when you come from a dance where a lady's poked a dimpled knee in yer face? Gosh!

"Far's I can see," continued Hen Dall, "this here crime wave is jest young folks finding out what life is. Most of 'em finds it's the life of Jesse James with illustrations from 'Artists and Models.' Youth, youth, youth, says Richard Le Galleon. Let 'er go, says I. Human nature don't change much, and folks thinks about the same as they usta—only they gotta travel in armored cars to do so."

"How about that tire?" asked Mrs. Wills. The corners of her mouth were coming up nicely.

"I give you my word as a Christian, Mrs. Wills," said Hen Dall, "I'd handya a new tire, right off the rack. But it wouldn't be a trade. It'd jest be a beauty prize. Why doncha slip over to Atlantic City and git a good one while yer about it?"

Mrs. Wills, now frankly smiling, said: "Oh, well. I think I'll put on balloons, anyhow."

"Balloons?" asked Hen Dall hopefully. "We carry a large stock of 'em."

"I'll say you do," she gurgled, and threw in the clutch.

(More of the Gas Man's wisdom and wit next month)

What Price Beauty—Continued from page 35

were both trembling. Another moment and Evelyn was in Ken's arms, the tears running down her cheeks as she lifted her face to his kiss.

For a long while Ken held Evelyn close, kissing her hair, her eyes, her mouth. She felt that nothing could ever change now. For her the world had stopped. She loved and was loved. She would never be lonely again. Ken—he loved her. He had told her so. She had heard those words from his mouth with his arms around her—"I love you."

So in six months they were married in the nave of St. Thomas's. Only the families and intimate friends were present. Carol McAllister had come home for the wedding, but was returning immediately to Italy. Ken remembered her and she remembered him, although she was younger than he. They had known each other at Southampton when they were children.

Of course, there was a lot of conversation about the marriage. Some said Evelyn McAllister was a fool. Women who liked the admiration of young men applauded the match—Evelyn had won a prize and more power to her. The debutantes luncheon parties had one topic—Carol McAllister's mother had married Ken Howell. The girls couldn't understand what he saw in that old woman.

They went abroad on their wedding trip. It was perfect. Evelyn's only worry was the fact that too often she found herself explaining things to Ken and acting in the capacity of an older traveler showing a younger one his way around.

One day while they were in Paris she found a new kind of facial treatment, and when Ken told her that evening how beautiful she looked she arranged the next morning to have the creams and lotions sent to her New York address. She didn't want Ken to see them by any chance in her luggage.

"It was all too wonderful, Polly. I never dreamed I could be so happy," said Eve, on the day she arrived in New York. The two friends were lunching in the Park Avenue apartment which Ken insisted upon leasing out of his own income.

Luncheon finished, they started up Park Avenue and turned into the Park at Sixtieth Street. How Polly hated Evelyn's endless exercise!

"I've just got to sit on this bench for a while, Eve," Polly protested finally. "Do you think you've made any inroads on that excess flesh you were moaning about?"

Evelyn laughed and sat down. "If I don't catch it now, Polly, I never will. That's the reason I'm determined not to go up one single ounce—no matter what happens. I must say I would have preferred resting this afternoon, but I had to go out anyhow. Come down to Miss Foot's with me while I have a facial treatment. She has a wonderful new thing she's using. I think I look much better after it. Let's go now, and then I can get a little nap before Ken comes home." And Evelyn's face softened as she thought of her husband. "I'm so happy, Polly," and she slipped her hand through Polly's arm. Polly at that moment was on the lookout for a taxi.

When Evelyn reached Miss Foot's, she walked into the searching light at the window and said:

"Look, Miss Foot. I think your new treatment has done wonders. My skin looks much smoother under my eyes, don't you think so?"

Evelyn regarded Miss Foot as a very important part of her life. Nothing was more vital to her than her engagements for facial treatment—three times a week.

IT HAD been the custom of Polly and Evelyn to lunch together every Saturday, unless something unusual occurred. But with the arrival of autumn the Saturday luncheons were interrupted because Ken and Evelyn went nearly every Saturday to some football game. Off in Ken's gray roadster—an open one, smartly foreign-built—they flew. Princeton, New Haven, Philadelphia.

Mondays found Evelyn exhausted, because Ken liked to make occasions of Saturday nights and, of course, on Sundays they were off again in the roadster to Long Island for golf. But Evelyn kept thinking it would be easier when winter came. No football games and no golf.

Winter, however, brought her no relief. Ken had the energy of four men. He never tired. He would have declined no invitations if he had his way. And time and again, after dinner and bridge, as they were leaving a party, he'd say: "Let's go somewhere and have a dance. No one can dance like you, Evelyn, and I love to sit in a restaurant and talk to you. I like to see you admired, darling."

What could she do? She was so afraid of failing to please him, and she must never let him know that she couldn't keep up with him.

Spring—and golf again. Evelyn liked golf and played a good game, but more than eighteen holes exhausted her. She left Ken once on the fourteenth hole. Her heart was acting queerly, and she felt dizzy.

How she did hate to leave the three other members of the foursome and go into that club-house alone. What a sight she was when she looked in the mirror! She lay on the sofa trying to erase that drawn look around her mouth, a smile painted on her face.

At any rate, she would have some rest during the summer. They had taken a country house, and she longed for the first of June to come, so that she could have long days of lying in a hammock and resting up to look beautiful when Ken came home.

But summer wasn't the summer she had expected. They joined a young country-club crowd, and their activities were as arduous as in New York—except that Ken played golf three and four after-

noons a week, and Evelyn played perforce with him. And the week-ends. They never had one alone. How she did want to be with Ken alone.

But he loved her. That was the main thing. Not once had she seen him show interest in the girls of his own years. How wonderful that was. Lots of women's lives were miserable because their husbands couldn't behave themselves—especially at parties, for all to see. Ken wasn't that kind.

Evelyn came back to town looking very badly. She went every day now to Miss Foot's. That kept her up, and she felt that as long as she could rely on these treatments she was safe.

THE years slipped by—or rather tore by. And Evelyn tore through those years at Ken's side, always making an effort, always putting a cruel tax on her strength to keep pace with her young husband. They had been married four years now. More than ever Evelyn adored him. But she was beginning to feel an intangible fear.

"Ken's in big cases now, Polly," she said one afternoon, as they were shopping. "It's made a great change in him. He isn't as buoyant as he used to be. He has business meetings at dinner, and often he has to go to Philadelphia."

Polly's suspicions were aroused at once, but she said:

"He's developing, dear. I understand he's doing beautifully. I wouldn't mind about his having to go out some evenings. It will give you a chance to go to bed early and store up energy."

"That reminds me," Evelyn said, "I want to get a little alarm-clock."

In the clock department Evelyn tried several and selected one with a soft ring.

"That will never wake up a maid," laughed Polly.

"But it isn't for a maid—it's for me," said Evelyn.

"What under the sun are you going to do with an alarm clock?" Polly asked as they left the counter. "Doesn't your man call Ken?"

Evelyn reddened.

"I'll tell you, Pol. I try to wake up every morning before Ken is awake. I just get up while he's still asleep, put some cream on my face and make up. I look so much better when I do that. But lately I haven't been able to go to sleep lots of nights for fear I wouldn't wake up. That's why I got the clock. Ken will never hear it—and perhaps I'll sleep better."

"Good idea," said Polly, but her heart ached for her friend. She knew that Ken wasn't as demonstrative as he had been. She noticed it. And when Evelyn told her about the business conferences she was sick. Polly knew life and Polly knew men. And one day she thought—she wasn't certain but she thought—she had seen Ken's car up the river road, with a girl in a green hat. Eve never wore green. She was superstitious about it.

Evelyn dropped Polly at the Ritz and drove to Miss Foot's. She had to wait for a moment while the beauty specialist finished with a customer. Evelyn could not see the client because she was at the far end of the room, which was partitioned with screens.

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While waiting she took off her blouse, unfastened her pearls, pushed her hair away from her forehead and leaned back. This was one place where she always relaxed. Miss Foot was doing a wonderful thing for her—keeping her young for Ken.

She smiled as she thought of Ken, but a lump came into her throat. He was different. They didn't talk of personalities any more. He seemed so occupied. Of course it was his business, but she missed being close to him. And he never noticed a new dress any more. But still he was sweet to her. No man keeps up to concert pitch all the time, especially when he is making his way in the world. And tonight he wouldn't be home for dinner. How lonely it was without him. Why hadn't she asked Polly to come over? She'd call up as soon as she got home. But Heaven would only know where Pol might be at that time.

MISS FOOT came to Evelyn, adjusted the bandage around her head to keep the cream from getting in her hair, and patted her shoulder unconsciously. They were friends, these two women. Evelyn put her head back, and Miss Foot applied the ointment.

"May I use your telephone, Miss Foot?" came a rather charming, high-pitched voice from the other end of the room.

"Certainly," said Miss Foot. "Right there on the desk in the next room."

"Rector 03371."

Evelyn gave such a start that Miss Foot asked:

"What's the matter, Mrs. Howell?"

"Just jumpy," replied Evelyn.

Rector 03371. Ken's number. His private phone which had no inside connection—not even for his secretary. Ken's telephone. Rector 03371. And a strange woman calling. Oh, she must be mistaken.

She waited.

"Is that you, Ken?"

The woman didn't even give her name. He knew her voice. Evelyn trembled. Was she hearing right? Had she gone crazy? What was this awful thing that was happening to her.

The girl was speaking.

"But you said . . . I know . . . but I thought you might. Please. Just this once. Oh—I know you asked me not to, but I just hoped. Not any more? But Ken——"

A moment's silence. Evelyn heard the click of the receiver as the girl slowly hung up.

Miss Foot leaned over Evelyn and proceeded with the treatment. The girl walked slowly out. The door shut.

"Who was that, Miss Foot?"

"I don't know, Mrs. Howell. A new customer."

Evelyn's head was in a whirl. That awful lump in her throat—and her heart was acting strangely again. If Miss Foot would only hurry up. Home. Home. She wanted to get home and lie down on the bed.

Ken—her Ken—and another woman. And a voice that had sounded young. Oh, what would she do? How would she act when she saw him? Would she speak of it? Not this. Not women. She couldn't stand it. She'd have to give up. She was icy cold from head to foot. Oh, Ken . . .

She almost staggered as she stepped across the little enclosure for her blouse, after Miss Foot had finished. She sat down to put on her hat, and, when she looked at herself, she had to control a moan of fright. The ghost was behind her. Right there over her shoulder. It was so close that she imagined she felt a cold breath blowing on her. Was that really herself—that haggard old woman she saw in the mirror?

Polly. She must see Polly. Was this really a business engagement Ken had tonight? Or was it another girl!

She crumpled up in the corner of her car. She could hardly keep from fainting. Then a sudden thought braced her: Ken had turned that girl down, hadn't he? Yes, he had. It would have been simple to see her. She begged him to, didn't she?

Perhaps he had had a fling—such a man would have temptations. She could understand that . . . What would she do? Perhaps he needed her help now . . . She shouldn't expect too much.

Jealousy—she'd be lost if she started that. That was the greatest weakness a woman could show. Wasn't she his wife? Had anyone else a right to him? Would she let anyone else get him? No. She'd not go crazy and spoil everything. She'd go home, and that night when he came in she would act as if nothing had happened. He might have been in a tangle with that girl, but he didn't encourage her, certainly. It must be over. She'd help him.

As she was driven up to the apartment house, she saw Ken's gray roadster parked just beyond the doorway. Was he home? What did that mean?

Evelyn was trembling as she went up in the elevator and almost at the moment that she rang the bell the door opened. There was Ken.

"Hello, darling," he said and kissed her. He held her in his arms for a moment. There was something different in his caress. He did need her. He was sorry. He was more tender than he had been in a long while.

He even led her over to the big arm chair and drew her down on his lap. He took off her hat and brushed her hair back. "Well, Curly Locks"—and he stroked her hair. He hadn't done that for a long time, nor for a long time had he called her Curly Locks. The endearment always made her feel young. "Got rid of the business meeting for tonight."

"And you're home nice and early, too, dear."

Evelyn didn't find it as hard as she thought she would. No, no, she would never mention it. She would try to make herself think that it had never happened—just as if she had had a bad dream.

CAROL arrived that spring, and the Howells were very gay. Everyone gave parties for the attractive homecomer, and the house was full of young people.

Evelyn found new happiness, and often thought what a wretched mistake she would have made if she had ever mentioned the incident at Miss Foot's. No one could be more domestic than Ken had been. He helped her with their entertaining and was especially kind to Carol. A less gracious husband might have regarded her return as an intrusion.

And Evelyn got more rest that spring. Carol's golf was excellent, and it was always a relief when she motored off with Ken on Saturday afternoons and Sundays to play with him. He didn't seem to mind Evelyn's absence. She used to drive to the club to meet them for tea.

After all, it was rather nice to have Carol with her. Naturally, she loved Carol. She had brought up this fair, lovely girl, and she had reason, therefore, to be proud of their relationship.

Carol was sensible, too. Not a bit man-crazy—perfectly contented to go about with Ken and herself. Not many young girls these days would be so willing to stay at home and play bridge with older people.

Evelyn couldn't understand it, but she had a feeling that Polly didn't care much for Carol. Surely she couldn't be jealous? Their friendship had never prevented other friendships. But Polly showed no enthusiasm about Carol. Sometimes Evelyn was afraid that Carol would see it. But seemingly she was not conscious of it at all.

What skin Carol had! Evelyn invariably took a chair with the light at her back when Carol was around. Carol's skin reminded her that she couldn't stand a strong light and in restaurants she hated the glare.

And that child could eat anything, and never put on a pound! How she and Ken did finish off the desserts. She could drink just as many cocktails as he did, too, and never show it.

Youth—that was the reason. Carol never wanted to go to bed. Ken would keep her up terribly late some nights, but she didn't mind. Once, when Evelyn was leaving them to go to her room, she caught herself almost saying:

"Good night, children."

Well, she would miss Carol when the right young man came along. Wonder when that would be?

She spoke of it once to Polly.

"I don't see Carol showing any signs of marriage, do you, Polly?"

"Marriage is not on that young lady's mind," was all that Polly said, looking at the smoke above her head.

"Don't you like Carol, Polly?" asked Evelyn gently. "Sometimes you act as if you don't approve of her."

"Too advanced for my taste in young girls, Eve," she said.

"Do you mean the drinking and smoking?" asked Evelyn.

"Not particularly," replied Polly, casually. "But they're different, these girls of today, I suppose. And then Carol's lived abroad. That might make a difference."

They sat without talking for a moment. It was a Saturday afternoon. They had lunched together.

Finally Polly asked:

"Where is Carol?"

"Playing golf with Ken."

"Are you going down for them?"

"No, we're going to the Jameson's dance tonight and I thought I would rest. I'll just run over to Miss Foot's and then come home and lie down. Ken and Carol

won't get back until late. You know, she can play right along with him. So I'll have a long nap. Don't forget, dear, we want you on the seventeenth. Do you realize it's our fifth wedding anniversary?"

"Yes, I do," said Polly. She grew silent.

"I'm so glad Carol will be here for it. She was going to Chicago this week to visit, but she has put it off until the day after the party. Ken's going salmon-fishing that week, too. I'll be alone, and you and I can lean back a bit. Isn't it awful, Polly—I'm utterly miserable without Ken, and yet I'm so tired that those ten days will seem like heaven to me. How do I look, Polly?"

"Fine," answered Polly, lying bravely, because as she sat there looking at her friend she realized for the first time that she was fading. Evelyn was fading. The make-up showed clearly on her now, and her face had little round pockets on each side of her jaw bone. And she always managed to wear a scarf around her neck. Polly wondered if Evelyn knew that age was making its marks. She must know. The scarf, if nothing else, was an admission of it.

THE night of the party came. Ken had been very sweet that day; he had sent Evelyn orchids and a beautiful fitted bag and, to carry out the idea of their wooden wedding, a very fine carved plaque.

Miss Foot came to Evelyn that night at seven-fifteen. She wanted the treatment as late as possible—to carry her through the evening.

Evelyn was lovely in a white satin dress, but with a quieter loveliness than formerly. But she was excited and her gray eyes shone.

Carol came in. She was in white, too. For a moment Eve was disappointed that Carol had chosen white, too. Eve had a little feeling that she wanted to look bridal, and she knew in a flash that it was Carol who looked the bride.

"You look lovely, Carol," Evelyn said generously.

"And so do you, Aunt Evelyn."

There were eighteen for dinner, and later more guests came in for dancing. It wasn't an entirely young party. Some of Eve's older friends were there.

Polly didn't have a very good time. She was unhappy. She felt something sinister in the air. She'd have to pull out of that. She'd take another drink.

She noticed that Ken and Carol kept dancing together to the point of rudeness on Ken's part. It seemed to Polly that she saw them only together—either dancing or side by side at the punch-bowl.

Polly was miserable. It wasn't right. Ken wasn't even a good host. Did Eve notice it?

Supper. There were Ken and Carol again. Carol was a lovely young thing. But why couldn't she keep her hands off Ken! Or was it his fault? Or—and Polly paused in her thought. Was it youth? Was it that driving force which made young men seek young women as their mates?

When the music started again Evelyn came up, took Polly's arm and led her into her dressing-room.

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Eve sat down at her dressing table, feverishly applied some rouge to her face, leaned over the mirror and smoothed the skin under her eyes.

"Polly," she said, "have you noticed how much Ken and Carol are dancing ——"

Fortunately at that moment two women entered the room in search of powder, and Polly made a general conversation to avoid answering Eve's question. But Eve *knew*.

Polly couldn't stand it any more. She was going home. She would slip out, telephone for a taxi herself and leave without saying anything. Evelyn would understand. She often did that.

Polly went to the telephone at the end of a hall in the other wing of the apartment, away from the drawing-room. She sat down at the small table and was just about to ask for her number, when she heard Ken's voice in a whisper in the next room, a little one which he used as a study.

"Get off at Harmon," he was saying. "The Century stops there to change engines. I'll meet you there in the roadster. . . . Goodnight, dearest. I'd better beat it now and make some character."

Quickly Polly got her wrap and left. How she got home, she never knew. She didn't undress for a long while, but sat bolt upright in a chair, smoking one cigaret after another.

Then she called up the information bureau at the Grand Central Station. The man on duty answered sleepily.

"Will you please tell me what time the Century Express arrives at Harmon on the Hudson? . . . Thank you, goodnight," she hung up.

THE next morning Polly was out of the house before nine. She knew Eve would phone her and she didn't want to have to talk to her.

She filled in an interminably long morning at a Turkish bath, lunched in the restaurant there, and at one o'clock drove to the railroad station at One Hundred and Twenty-fifth Street. She boarded the first train for Harmon.

It was hot. And when she got to Harmon the sun seemed to be twice as hot as in New York. She walked to the deserted end of the platform, and lighted a cigaret. She didn't know how she was going to do it or what she was going to say, but she was determined to stop it. She'd stop it if she had to throw herself in front of Ken's car.

It was almost time for the Century to come in now. She watched the road to see if Ken's gray roadster was in sight. She looked at her wrist-watch. Strange —he wasn't there. It would have been natural for him to be ahead of time.

Only a minute or two more now. She looked down the track and then turned to the road again. No Ken.

Slowly the magnificent Century pulled in and Polly scanned the cars. Was anyone getting off? Yes, a door was being opened not far from where she was standing.

The porter jumped out and put the stool on the ground. Yes—there was Carol, in a tan suit. She knew Carol's foot before she saw her.

Polly was at the porter's side in a flash.

"Don't take that bag, porter," she said. "This young lady is not getting off."

Automatically, with an expression of bewilderment in her face, Carol had lifted her suit case as the porter reached to take it from the floor of the vestibule.

The porter looked from one to the other, puzzled.

"Don't try to get off the train, Carol!" said Polly—and her eyes blazed with irresistible command. "I'll prevent you—by force, if necessary!"

The bell was ringing. The conductor had waved to the engineer.

The porter threw up his stool and swung aboard. The door shut with a bang. The cars slid by Polly.

She walked to the nearest seat, sank into it, and opened her bag for a cigaret.

Then she looked up the road again. No sign of Ken's car. Perhaps he hadn't intended to be there just when the train pulled in.

How hot it was! Polly took off her hat and consulted her time-table. She sighed and decided to take the next train to New York.

She crossed to the other side of the platform. In the distance she heard the whistle blowing for the station and with a fascination that momentarily dispelled her troubles, she watched the engine growing enormous as it approached.

As the brakes ground to a stop she heard a man call out: "Terrible smash-up down the road!" She turned and listened sharply.

"Man killed—crashed into a telegraph pole at that turn down there by the convent—right in front of the stone schoolhouse."

Polly followed the man into the station.

The perspiration seemed to freeze on her forehead. Could it be? She was trembling from head to foot.

"What kind of a car?" she asked him. "Gray roadster? I was waiting for—a tall young man—with dark curly hair."

"Howell?" asked the man. "That was the name on his papers."

Polly couldn't utter a sound. Her throat was tight. Her eyes filled—for Evelyn.

"That's he," she finally gulped, as the man led her to an automobile. "How did it happen?"

"Only one man saw it, but said he was hitting fifty down that hill and didn't slow up when he came to the curve. He must have skidded, because he smashed right into the pole. Must have been killed instantly."

"You're very kind to help," said Polly.

They drove in silence. On approaching, Polly saw a crowd and many automobiles parked along the road. There was no noise. Silently the curious ones who had stopped got into their cars and drove off slowly.

It was the hush attending death which Polly felt as the man stopped the car and helped her out.

Ken—there he lay—a poor twisted thing. The blood had matted his hair, but his face was not disfigured. One arm was thrown over his head. There on his wrist was the watch that Evelyn and she had bought for him at Tiffany's soon after the engagement was announced.

Evelyn. How could she tell Evelyn! How would she start? Poor, poor Evelyn. What would she say first?

Poor Ken. She hadn't the remotest idea how she was going to do it. Polly wasn't particularly religious, but she found herself praying.

And then she knew the story she would tell. She had driven up to Peekskill with Amanda Corliss to see Amanda's boy, who was at school there. Eve didn't know Amanda. Returning, they had seen a string of cars parked along the road. Even before they slowed down as they reached the scene of the accident, Polly recognized Ken's unmistakable roadster. She recalled that Eve had told her Ken was starting for Montreal on his fishing trip that day!

Yes, the story would stand. Ironically enough Ken and Carol had provided her with it themselves—to cover their own plans. Carol, she remembered, supposedly was going out to Chicago to visit a friend.

"HELLO, Pol. I'm so glad you're here. I've been trying to get you all day. Where under the sun have you been?"

Polly followed Evelyn into her room and closed the door. Eve had hot towels bandaged tightly around her head.

Polly put her arms around Evelyn and kissed her very tenderly. Then she stood looking at her for a moment.

"Evelyn——"

"What is it, Polly? Quick! Is it Ken and Carol?"

Polly took a long breath.

"It's not Ken and Carol, dear. It's Ken."

"What, what—Ken! What is it?" Eve almost whispered and grasped Polly's hand.

"Ken has had an accident, Evelyn, and they're bringing him home."

"Oh—tell me. Where? When—tell me Polly?" Her hand went to her heart; her white lips hardly formed the words. "How is he? When will he come?"

"Evelyn—" and Polly put her hands on Evelyn's shoulders—"Ken is dead."

Such a cry—it rang in Polly's ears many years. It was the cry of a poor, beaten little child.

ONE afternoon when Evelyn had been up for a few days, Polly said, thinking to interest her in going out:

"Let's go over to Miss Foot's, Eve. A treatment always makes you feel better."

"It's no use, Polly."

But unconsciously, from force of habit, she walked aimlessly to the mirror.

There she was—gaunt and haggard. Her face was furrowed with lines. Her eyes were dead. The mourning was cruel to her in its unbecomingness.

"It's no use, Polly," she said in a voice which Polly hardly recognized. She waited a moment. "I'm glad Ken never saw me this way. I might have lost him to a younger woman—he might have become really interested in Carol. You see it's here, Polly—it was bound to come——"

"What's here, dear?" Polly asked, looking up into Evelyn's ashen face.

"The Ghost."

———

The Colonel's Lady

Continued from page 61

quite self-possessed; one might easily conclude, happy. Tom, she said, had great admiration for his colonel's ability, attributing to his genius the Regiment's remarkable improvement in proficiency and discipline.

"Yes," Hatfield's lips twisted into a grudging smile, "the Regiment *has* improved, and it's going to improve a lot more. I'm making my officers function!"

Mrs. Rafferty, evidently impressed, wondered whether the efficiency of L Company mightn't be helped if her husband were released and returned to duty. He shook his head.

"Impossible," he declared. "I have nothing against your husband personally. But he's got to suffer for the sake of discipline."

Her face fell. She sighed. Presently she looked up, asking whether Tom could still win his commission after being court-martialed, and again became pensive when the possibility was denied.

"How long do you expect to stay down here?" queried Hatfield abruptly.

"Until this matter is settled." The quiet voice and calm gaze evinced a settled resolve. He frowned, aware that he had no authority to send her packing back to Brooklyn.

"The court-martial may not convene for ten days."

She rose and, as he stood facing her, a sense of the falseness of the situation came over him, as if what was most important had been left unsaid.

"Then I'll wait ten days."

He fixed her flushed countenance with a puzzled look. The woman had spirit. That was why he couldn't feel annoyed at her refusal to take a hint. Something impelled him to prolong the interview.

"You must find it rather lonely in town. I suppose you haven't many friends there," he hazarded.

"None," she answered simply. "You see, Colonel, my friends are all in the North. I don't care particularly to meet the sort of people anyone can know at a hotel."

Hatfield pursed his lips. As if divining his thoughts, she added with spirit, "I suppose you army officers think an enlisted man can't be a gentleman. Tom may be unschooled and lack polish, but he is a gentleman just the same."

"Of course he is, Mrs. Rafferty, and he'd have been an officer, too, if he'd obeyed orders. That is the first duty of a soldier."

HE FELT a new respect for Mrs. Rafferty. She wasn't a woman who held herself cheap. He found himself regarding her in a new light, as a personality rather than merely an exceptionally attractive female. If he wasn't a colonel and she a sergeant's wife—— This business of rank was sometimes devilishly inconvenient. A sudden idea seemed to strike Mrs. Rafferty.

"Why not dine with me Thursday evening?"

The Colonel flushed brick red and shook his head. "Thank you. I'm sorry. Impossible." He held out his hand for the leave taking, but she ignored it.

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"Oh, I understand. I should have remembered I am a soldier's wife, and it's against custom, isn't it, for an officer to be seen socially with an enlisted man's wife?"

He nodded gravely.

"It does seem so absurd," she laughed. "I can dine with a governor and a senator, I can take tea with their wives, but army etiquette forbids me to be seen chatting with the rawest young lieutenant from West Point. Now, Colonel, isn't it ridiculous?"

"It is the custom," he parried.

"And you think all customs holy?"

"No, but they should be observed."

"Very well—" she sighed. "But if I promised that dinner be served in a private diningroom——" Her red lips pouted adorably. Hatfield caught a fleeting look of promise in her violent eyes. She *was* so confoundedly pretty . . .

Their first dinner which ensued two days later was provocative. Mrs. Rafferty drank her cocktails and kept her head, though he gained a point when she finally permitted him to hold her slender hands, even press them to his lips. With some women it was better to go slow at first—a little old style gallantry until you won their confidence.

Only after the third tête-à-tête, as they bowled along a quiet country road in his big closed car, with a wary eye on the driver's back, did he put his arm about her, this time unresisted.

An elusive perfume emanating from her blonde hair filled his nostrils, waking long-repressed emotions as if by galvanic shock. He tilted back her head and—kissed her. She trembled, but made no effort to resist.

"What time can I see you? It must be tonight," he demanded in a husky whisper, the blood hammering through his veins.

Almost inaudibly she murmured: "Twelve o'clock."

Then she pushed him away, shyly yet with unexpected strength, and turned her head to avoid the ardor of his gaze. What though she would not permit a second kiss just now.

Alice Rafferty's room at the Planters' Hotel that night presented an unusual aspect. On the dressing table was a bottle of gin, a bowl of cracked ice and several bottles of ginger ale. Hatfield's overcoat lay on the sofa, beside it the tunic with its silver eagles. The shadow of an unformed suspicion crossed his mind when she again broached the matter of her husband's blighted prospects. He turned the conversation with an anecdote, and she took the hint. No further awkward references. His third glass was drained when the woman had put her second half empty on the table.

Abruptly he moved from the fire-place where he had been standing, elbow on the mantel, regarding her. In two strides was at her side. Never had she seemed more desirable. Languorous abandon was in her attitude as she leaned back in the big arm-chair, her legs curled up, in her shadowed eyes that promise. How deliciously yielding her figure as he gathered her in his arms . . .

Then—a piercing shriek ringing in the room! Sharp finger nails clawed bleeding furrows down his face and tore at his white neckband. At the same instant she wrenched herself from his grasp, knocked the receiver from the telephone on the bedside table.

"Help!"

Hatfield's face blanched. He could have throttled her—killed her. The wench had tricked him. She had set a booby trap and he had walked into it like a callow Johnny.

"You——!"

She threw herself on the bed panting from the exertion of a supreme effort. As the disheveled man frantically buttoned his hastily-snatched tunic, voices sounded from the hallway, followed by a clamorous tattoo on the door. A rattling of the knob and the door swung wide. In burst an excited clerk with the house detective.

The following day, by order from Regimental Headquarters, Sergeant Rafferty, much to his surprise, was released and returned for duty to L Company. There was no court martial. Mrs. Rafferty had in her possession two affidavits, sworn to by witnesses, of an attempted assault. It was not unlikely that should the Sergeant's commission be unduly delayed she would show them to the Division Commander and, if that proved ineffective, take them to higher authority.

NOW as Hatfield paced the tile floor of a farmhouse in Champagne on that hot July day, and reviewed the Lieutenant's record during the last weeks in the States and the month they had been in France, he perceived that Rafferty had justified him. The appointment was a distinct asset to the Regiment. Rafferty's work as instructor in map drawing and compass bearings in Officers' School evoked a compliment from the General. The fellow had functioned. No one could say Hatfield played favorites in commissioning him. But what about now? The man's special capacity was no longer of unique value. Why not send him to Division Headquarters? Settled!

Again he became conscious of the dank odor of fermenting manure, the rumble of distant artillery. Anxiety yielded to a feeling of profound satisfaction. Tomorrow the best regiment in the Division, his regiment, would meet the supreme test. At last they were to be blooded. A tap sounded at the door.

"Come in," he barked, stepping to his chair.

Temporary Second Lieutenant Rafferty entered, closed the door, clicked heels and saluted.

"Lieutenant Rafferty requests return for duty with L Company, sir."

Hatfield glared at the petitioner. He wondered how much Rafferty knew. In all probability he knew nothing. Then it occurred to him that this red-headed young fellow with generous mouth and jaunty bearing was of the breed that courts danger—just the man to slip off and join his comrades in action. That would never do. Return him to his company, eh?

"I'll have to think it over. See me after supper," he said drily, picking up his pen. The Lieutenant saluted and retired, closing the door behind him.

"Say, what's eatin' the old man." Rafferty, a trifle anxious, asked the grizzled Sergeant-Major a moment later. "Won't make up his mind about lettin' me go back to the Comp'ny till to-night."

"Don't know, Lieutenant. Guess he don't want the best map work instructor in the Division bumped off," replied the other as he fitted a regimental strength report into the typewriter.

"Aw, can that stuff. My Gawd! D'you think it could be that? Why did the General want to ruin me with his kind remarks! What's the use of gettin' a rep and a couple of gold bars fer findin' your way in the dark when they won't give you a chance to get into a scrap? So you don't think the old man 'll let me go?"

"I wouldn't like to bet on it." The Sergeant-Major was bored and commenced typing his report.

Rafferty bent down and resting his hands on the desk confided in a low voice: "You're all wrong. I know how to work these birds. I ain't been private and non-com in this man's army seven years for nothin'. They're all scared of 'Hanger' Hatfield. Huh! He ain't worse than some I've soldiered under. Strung up a bunch of lousy Filippinos once. Hell! That's nothin'. Always treated me damn white. Just keep your eye on yours truly."

In his office the Colonel laid down his pen and stared at the brass box. Then he unlocked it and drew the letter from the neatly arranged file. The passage that held his attention for a full half minute read:

> —"and if my husband is killed because you sent him to the trenches you may be sure I will do everything in my power to get the facts before the Secretary of War. My cousin who is in the Government will see that I get justice."

"Damn her," he cursed softly.

That evening after a long conference in which the plan of attack was meticulously reviewed, Hatfield dined with General Melton and his staff at Division Headquarters, a dilapidated chateau five miles nearer the Marne. Since the Germans evacuated the district nearly four years before, very little had been done to make the building habitable, but that little satisfied the Spartan soul of General Melton.

He was content to sup at a plank table on wooden horses by the light of candles stuck in empty wine bottles, and dispense with such effect adjuncts as a tablecloth, silver and the amenities. The committee of Congressmen, his guests, doubtless were gratified to realize their repast was no better than that of the lowliest private, and if they did not encounter the dangers at least they were experiencing some of the rigors of active service.

"Well, gentlemen," the General said, as he lit a cigar and pushed back his chair, "if you wish, I will arrange to have you taken as far as one of the regimental headquarters tomorrow, but I can't be responsible for you nearer the line than that. Hatfield, I think the honor falls to you."

Hatfield pursed his lips. He hated the breed, but without the good will of these politicians he never could become a general officer, because under the jealous sys-

tem of army management permanent promotion above the rank of colonel is by Congressional favor.

"Glad to have you, gentlemen," he said with forced politeness. "Come in the afternoon. I won't be able to do much for you, but you can see how the system works."

Taciturn by nature he had been more than ordinarily preoccupied during dinner. General Melton's remarks to him in private on his arrival at Headquarters gave food for thought. In that conversation Hatfield's superiority over the other regimental commanders in the province of training was tacitly implied. But the test of training, as Melton observed, was performance. Efficiency in drill and maneuvers was not the criterion of an officer's ability. The ordeal of battle must determine fitness for higher command. From these trite generalities Melton jumped abruptly to particulars, declaring that on the outcome of the morrow's action depended Hatfield's promotion to brigade rank.

Now, great as is the professional officer's pride in his unit and devotion to its interests, promotion, especially as the reward for success in battle, is the lodestar to which his thoughts ever turn. Hatfield was ambitious. To replace his eagle insignia with the star of a brigadier general had been for months the goal of his aspirations. Obsessed by this ambition on which fortune seemed to smile he did not linger over his cigar and was the first to rise. He bade good-bye to the staff officers and their guests who wished him luck, then strode out of the room. In the lofty marble-paved hall he was overtaken by a lank Congressman, aquiline of feature, his sparse hair and moustache flecked with gray.

"One moment, Colonel," he said pleasantly. "There's something I want to talk to you about." He met Hatfield's keen stare with a shrewd penetrating glance.

"Well?" demanded the officer slackening his pace. They were on the terrace out of earshot of the group they had just quitted. The moon-lit night was warm and stars were in the sky. As if weighing his words the stranger spoke:

"I sat next to you at dinner, but I don't suppose you remember my name since you didn't talk to me. My name is Danforth. I remember yours very well, because I happen to have heard it before. My cousin, Mrs. Rafferty, mentioned you.

Hatfield halted as though shot and whirled about to face the man.

"Well," he growled, "I can't discuss your cousin with you, Mr. Danforth. I've got to get back to my regiment. Good night, sir." He turned away.

"Wait!" cried the other, peremptorily, "I want you to understand me." His tone changed to a note of persuasion. "Let's talk this matter over sensibly, Colonel. I happened just now to mention your name to the General. He thinks very highly of your ability." Hatfield flushed. Danforth pursued. "Your regiment, he tells me, is one of the best disciplined over here. The General says you have a reputation for getting things done. It would be a pity if your future were compromised by the disclosure of certain facts that may have nothing to do with your efficiency in the service, but might be construed as conduct—what is it you say in the Army?—unbecoming an officer and a gentleman?" He pulled thoughtfully at his moustache and added, "I doubt if Congress would like it."

"What are you driving at?" Hatfield asked harshly.

"I am simply letting you know my cousin's happiness means a good deal to me." His gaze shifted to the Colonel. "I haven't met Lieutenant Rafferty. It was a war marriage, but he's a good enough chap, I imagine, if not quite in her class. His wife tells me he is attached to your Headquarters. She has an idea that certain motives—well, of revenge, might induce you to expose him *beyond the line of duty*. Of course I understand you would not be capable of anything like that."

The innuendo could not have been more obvious. Hatfield's face from which the color had gone became livid. His broad fists clenched convulsively. For an instant he was deprived of the power of speech, and in that moment the iron control long years in the service had instilled came to his rescue. Only the twitching muscles under the eyes and a slight huskiness of his deep voice hinted the pent fury.

"Mr. Danforth," he said quietly, "I am responsible for my regiment and my officers. If Lieutenant Rafferty should be a casualty it will be in line of duty."

He turned on his heel, walked down the marble stairs and stepped into his motor, while Danforth, a perplexed frown on his brow, stood watching him.

MOUNTED, accompanied by the Adjutant and four orderlies, Hatfield swung out of the courtyard gate of his headquarters and posted northward, the horses' hoofs clattering on the stone road—a luminous silver ribbon under a waning moon. As they passed the last shadowy house of the abandoned village the glowing hands of his wrist watch pointed to 2.05. Twenty minutes later the riders swerved from the *route nationale* and followed a dirt track bordered on one side by the forest, on the other by wheat fields. Horses at a walk, the cavalcade progressed silent as phantoms, the squat figure of Colonel Hatfield paired on the left with the gaunt silhouette of Captain Sanford, behind them a blur of orderlies. A figure detaching itself from the backness of the wood advanced toward them.

"There's our guide, sir," said Captain Sanford breaking the long silence. "Lead on," he commanded sharply. The soldier shouldered his rifle, saluted and trudged ahead of them, presently turning into a winding leafy path that compelled the horsemen to follow in file and guard against low branches. Occasionally the stillness was broken by the sullen boom of an enemy gun, followed after a lapse of several seconds by a crash far back in the forest. At times they heard a rustling sound as of a ship under full sail forging through waves that swished back against her waist—a giant shell hurtling comet-like through the higher atmosphere, so many leagues beyond the line its starting point, and so far to the rear its objective that neither the report of the field piece nor the explosion of the missile was audible.

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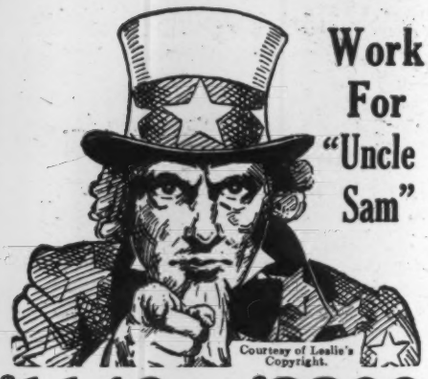

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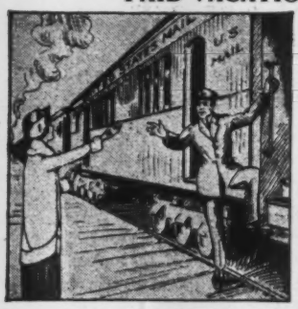

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their left the sharp biting crack of a 75 sounded, and then another and another, until single reports merged in the crescendo roar of a thousand savage voices. The barrage had begun. While the French and American massed artillery played its dance of death, the horsemen, restraining their frightened mounts with difficulty, emerged from the forest path into a glade. Beyond the fringe of woods on the farther side they could discern, between the tree trunks a rolling plain. its wheat fields a tawny splash under the pale moon. The guide halted.

"First Battalion position, sir," he shouted, his voice sounding a whisper. Other shadowy forms approached. Hatfield and the Adjutant dismounted, turned over their animals to the orderlies, and, led by Major Farnsworth and his Adjutant, inspected the position. The awful din of the barrage made conversation impossible except in shouts.

"No contact with the Third Battalion, sir," bellowed the Major cupping his hands over his mouth. "They're not in position yet. We've got liaison with the Second on our right."

"Keep out your patrols," roared Hatfield, "you *must* make contact!"

JUST before dawn there was a sudden cessation of the titanic clamor. A brooding stillness supervened and only a ringing of the ears made the memory of that demoniac two hours more real than a dream. Standing on a knoll at the edge of the wood Hatfield watched the First Battalion clamber out of battered trenches, almost at his feet, that they had taken over from a scant troop of French cavalry, and form for the attack.

Outwardly he was the aggressive, hard-bitten commander of old, but in his heart despair reigned. The Third Battalion had not been found. He knew too well what that meant. Already he envisaged Farnsworth's exposed flank raked by enfilading machine gun fire as the First Battalion advanced across No-Man's Land. A half hour before, the last of the mounted orderlies had been sent off on what he knew to be a well-nigh hopeless search. The others had not reported back and were doubtless still combing the forest for the missing troops. For once, faced by impending calamity, he was helpless. Yet so strong was the habit of control that, as he stood, feet planted wide apart—hands clenched behind his back, and watched his troops deploy, the saturnine expression, the forward thrust jaw bespoke absolute confidence of victory. Farnsworth gave the arm signal forward which was repeated by the officers of the leading companies. When they had advanced a hundred yards the supporting companies moved forward in trace.

Five minutes later the first enemy shell burst in the wheat field. Through his binoculars Hatfield could now see the Second Battalion far to the right advancing steady as on parade. To the front the First Battalion receded from him. It was a gallant sight, the combat groups moving forward in perfect alignment until white puffs and black geysers worked sudden transformation. Each group disintegrated, and now single dots, widely spaced, crept forward as though held in their relative positions by invisible wires. Not a minute passed but he swept an anxious glance to the north where a morning fog impaired visibility, and then returned his fascinated gaze to the attacking troops. Wreaths of smoke hung in a dense pall above them. Some of the dots no longer moved, and then a great many more became fixed.

"Oh, Christ!" he groaned.

The buzzing of vicious hornets sounded close by. Somewhere off in the blue a machine gunner had caught a glimpse of the two officers through telescopic sights. With the twang of a snapped violin cord a bullet buried itself in a tree back of them.

"Look out, Colonel," shouted the Adjutant. "They're firing at us."

Hatfield, lowering his glasses, stared at the prone man with scornful fury, his mouth twisted into a grimace that revealed blunt yellow teeth.

"Hell," he growled, "they're slaughtering us."

Again his eyes were glued to the binoculars. Sanford, crimson with shame, jumped to his feet.

"Damn machine guns," snarled Hatfield. "God! Where is my Third Battalion!" he whispered through parched lips.

The moving dots wavered on the distant slope. Ant-like they crawled forward, hesitated, stopped. Some of them moved back and then crawled painfully forward again.

"Done for," muttered Sanford unable longer to endure the spectacle. But Hatfield kept his glasses focused on the attack.

"No, damn you," he rasped, denying what was self-evident. And then, as though suddenly possessed he dropped his glasses, turned his back on the contest, and ran with heavy strides into the woods, the binoculars suspended about his neck swinging against his body at every step. Sanford, ignorant of his purpose, followed. In a moment they were in the saddle, the Colonel guiding his mount between the tree trunks back into the trampled wheat field. One quick glance at the distant battle and he turned north, driving the beast with whip and spur at a furious rate along the fringe of woods.

The Adjutant pursuing saw Hatfield's horse pitch to the ground in full career, throwing the rider clear. For a moment he lay gasping, then jumped up with an oath and lurched to his horse. A single glance told the story—a machine gun bullet had passed through the animal's chest. Sanford reigning in vaulted out of his saddle. In a trice the Colonel was in his place. The Adjutant grasped a stirrup leather and taking giant strides as the horse dragged him on managed to keep abreast.

The forest at their left, as they descended a slope, now appeared full of mist. In places a faint breeze caused the fog to eddy and dissolve in floating wreaths. Somewhere in that gray obscurity the Third Battalion was groping to the light, the troops that could perhaps even now turn a holocaust into victory. The rider reined in and stared into the dense wall of fog through which a few tree trunks shadowed forth like the gray columns of a cathedral. His brow contracted, as if by a supreme effort of the

will he were attempting to penetrate some inscrutable secret.

A shout sounded seeming at a great distance, and then the unmistakable crackling of twigs made by the passage of many men through rank undergrowth was audible.

Hatfield raised himself in his stirrups and bellowed:

"This way, Third Battalion!"

Congealing out of the fog, ghostly figures materialized. Spurring up to the most advanced group the Colonel found Major Matthews with his staff. The four companies in columns of twos emerged from the wood almost simultaneously at different points, their lengths undulating like the scaly bodies of serpents. Hatfield threw his leg over the pommel and slid to the ground. As the battalion deployed he stepped up to the Major, viciously thrashing his riding boot with his whip.

"What in hell happened to you?" he demanded truculently.

"It was the artillery transport and the fog, Colonel. We had to turn off the road—it was jammed with traffic—a mile short of the crossroad, and work through the timber. You couldn't see your own hand. Lucky you sent us Rafferty."

"Sent who?" Hatfield snarled.

"Lieutenant Rafferty, sir. We'd have been up against it without him. Only wish you'd sent him earlier. He knows every foot of the terrain. Got us through on compass bearings and knowing the lay of the land."

So Rafferty had rejoined his battalion without orders! A clear act of disobedience. The Colonel was in a quandary. The idea of a sprig of a lieutenant disobeying orders enraged him, but that this serious offense should have been the means of bringing up the essential troops complicated matters. Rafferty was nowhere to be seen. Doubtless he had returned to his company off there on the right. Suppose the fellow should be killed? He did not pursue the thought.

THE story of the Third Battalion's belated participation in that day's fiercely contested action is recorded in the divisional history and need not be repeated here. One incident deserves fuller mention than the editorial footnote accords.

During an advanced stage of the conflict the forward elements of L Company, which formed the right of the regimental line, were caught in a machine gun trap. A dozen khaki clad figures lay at the bottom of a gentle slope under a leaden hail from the crest, some of them with the immobility of death; others, incapacitated by their wounds, groaned or gasped for breath, while three or four unscathed, realizing that even to crawl spelled certain annihilation, clawed at the turf in a frantic attempt to sink their bodies beneath the low swinging scythe of hot lead.

Suddenly, silhouetted against the crest of the enemy's position, appeared a squat little figure as if from nowhere, a figure grasping a pistol with which it beckoned them to come on. But the prone men, unnerved, still hugged the soil until the apparition, thundering down upon them, resolved itself into their own Colonel, profanely commanding them to advance!

And then they became aware that something had happened to that diabolical machine gun which no longer played the devil's tattoo over their prostrate bodies.

Holy Christopher, what guts! "Hanger" Hatfield must have crawled round the Boche flank and, single-handed, pumped his automatic into the enemy gunners. Who ever heard of a colonel pulling that kind of stuff!

Now as he dashed among them his squat figure seemed to loom into eerie proportions. A berserker frenzy possessed him. Three men rose, seized their rifles and awkwardly stumbled forward. A fourth raised himself with delicate care on his hands in the manner of a deer stalker who sights his quarry.

"So this is where you are, eh, Rafferty," Hatfield bellowed. "Well, damn you, come on! Look alive!"

"I can't, Colonel. They got me."

And so they had, just above both knees. Hatfield's face showed profound disgust. As the young officer sank again to the ground the Colonel turned without a word and hastened to catch up with the advancing troops.

TWO hours later Rafferty lay beneath a tree, his wounded legs bound in many yards of bandage. In a long queue down the road nearby a line of ambulances extended past tents with red cross flags drooping at their peaks. Since he had been given a hypodermic he was suffering less, and wondering how long it would be before the tired stretcher bearers came for him again and carried him to one of the ambulances. Regimental first aid stations offer few conveniences. They rarely tempt their guests to linger.

Hatfield was riding past when his keen eye detected Rafferty. Dismounting and turning his animal over to the orderly he strode up to the lieutenant.

"Rafferty," he said in his habitual acrimonious tone, "do you realize when you left my headquarters last night you acted without orders?"

"Yes, sir," the other replied wearily.

"You know that amounts to disobeying orders—punishable under Articles of War?"

"Yes, sir." Rafferty was tired, discouraged. He wished the little terror would go away and leave him in peace. Bitter thoughts passed through his mind. If you tried to do the right thing you were certain to have punishment and disgrace for recompense. What a fool he was to have got himself shot.

"Well," Hatfield rumbled on, "your unmilitary behavior helped the 99th to win. I've taken that fact into consideration, too. The French are awarding you a Croix de Guerre and I shall recommend you for a D. S. C. But don't let it happen again. I can't have my officers acting like Bolsheviks."

"No, sir," smiled Rafferty.

Hatfield frowned, turned away, took two steps toward the road and then turned back.

"Here," he growled, tossing his silver cigarette case on the man's chest, "you might need this in the hospital."

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"I begged him to tell me if there was anything written down anywhere, and he winced and grew hard—he was always so gentle and good to me at other times—and he would say, 'Not a damn word!' Then he would kiss me and rumple my hair and tell me not to worry—I'd know soon enough—and I wouldn't be any happier for knowing. What shall I do, Brant?"

Brant strode the length of the room. His brain was a maelstrom of angry resentment against Northrup. He knew North's history, knew he had had no relatives, few friends. But whatever the mystery that lay behind Janvi, whatever North's intent had been, one cool breath of certainty brought relief to Brant as actual as a breeze across the blazing Atacama. Janvi's eyes were pure as an altar flame. Evil was helpless against the white armor of her innocence. To Brant this conviction came with a flaming wave of relief and the inhibiting shyness which had prisoned him for years lifted like a weight.

"I love you, Janvi," he said softly, "I love you. Did you know that?"

She shivered a little and her lip trembled.

"I know," she said evenly. "I knew that day—when you came—so brown and tired and still. I—I saw it in your eyes. A woman always knows—doesn't she? But O Brant—I can't! I can't! How can I—when I don't know who I am?"

She was half hysterical again, palms outflung, slender body tortured with sobs. Brant laid hungry hands on the shining tremble of her shoulders.

He was himself a little exalted. The grave loneliness, which had shut him in and made him a friend to old men, a quiet, wistful smoker of elderly pipes, had sloughed away. A proud wind was in his nostrils. He was young!

"What does it matter, Janvi? You're my girl—the girl God made for me! What does it matter—the rest of it?"

"Oh, but it matters, Brant!" She drew away. "Not to know. Not to know—*anything!* To be nobody—nameless—like the wind!"

"Let's not worry, Janvi." Even a matter of fact tone of consolation could not keep the trumpet timbre out of Brant's voice. "Everything will come out all right. North was eccentric but he was square—we'll find something, some record—a will perhaps. He'd had these spells before—he wouldn't be taken unaware. He was always square—always did what was fair and right."

THERE was an instant's curious stillness. Her head came up a bit, her lips steadied, grew judicial.

"Always?" she repeated in a queer voice. "Always?"

Brant felt the tension; his face burned.

"I've known North a long time, Janvi. He had a queer code—but he held to it sternly."

She was as white as death. "You're thinking—of those women?"

It was as if she had turned a merciless searchlight into his eyes. The dread which had lurked in his mind floated up and Brant could feel the searing of its putrid death in the white flame of her eyes.

"No—Janvi—no!"

She seemed not to hear. She was looking far off and by some merciless necromancy Brant Gilvey saw what she saw . . . a girl with pale curled hair stretched sobbing across a bed in Osorno; Gertrude laughing as women in hell laugh; a linked history of tragedy, pitiful, dead! His soul writhed, and like swords Janvi's eyes slashed through his contrite defense.

"And you thought that, Brant? You thought that—of me?"

"My God, Janvi, no—no!"

"You thought I was—one of them?" A bitter shrug cast off his eager stammering denial. "Oh—I know. I know all about—them. I've been here a year. And he talked—there were letters too. I—it never occurred to me that you—people might think—that—of me!"

She walked wearily to the window still lashed with rain.

A poignant wretchedness rang in Brant's voice. "Janvi, I knew—when I looked at you—I knew! I love you—I love you!"

"I saw it in your eyes—those first days," she went on relentlessly. "I saw bewilderment—unbelief in your eyes—and I was too proud to understand. Oh, I don't blame you, Brant. It was almost—inevitable—wasn't it? You've been so near to him always. You've heard so much of—them!" She pressed her hand to her throat, her mouth shaking piteously. "I—I think I can't stand any more now, Brant. I'll say goodbye—now."

"Janvi wait—you shall listen to me! Janvi——" Brant sprang after her. "Janvi!"

But she shook her head sadly and went out, closing the door. Brant plunged into the hall, caught a whisk of her gown vanishing up the stairs, heard the soft click of a locked door.

A gray hollow day had come when he awoke next morning. He had slept little and his head felt light. In the rooms below was the hushed order of death. The scent of flowers lay heavy in the firelit rooms, and old Macrae, Northrup's yellow skinned servant, stood with his hands behind him, doleful at a window.

"Miss Janvi's gone, sir," he said in answer to Brant's question. "She left—good while ago—in a taxi. Didn't wait for the funeral. Took all her clothes and trunks and everything. Looked like she'd died herself, poor little thing—white as a sheet and her hands shaking. No, she never said where she was going—just said goodbye."

St. Veronica's. Where else could she go? Through the long misery of three dragging days, Brant comforted himself with the assurance that she had nowhere else to go. Then, when his last duty to North was paid, he sought a priest and learned the location of St. Veronica's.

But in the quiet office of the Mother Superior silence fell again. Yes, the Reverend Mother remembered the girl with the strange name. Yes, she had returned. But there had been inquiries—relatives, the soft-voiced, adamant Mother suggested—and she had gone away again. No, there was no address.

Brant went out numbly. Motors tore past. An iron door clanged softly. Somewhere a bell began to ring, a sad bell with the haunting timbre of loneliness.

People jostled him. The world was very crowded. And yet so utterly, desolately empty. He tramped the streets hardly knowing where he went. Too many people. He needed room. The white, sifting, arid emptiness of the desert.

THE little hotel at Copiapo had been shaken so often by earthquakes that it was lopsided, every window canted, every door sagging and groaning, shelves slanted till the tin washbasins were kept from sliding off only by the gummy adherence of slivers of soap stuck to the wood.

In the office two men sat at a table against the wall, its wooden top ringed with slopped wine hardened to the consistency of varnish.

One, a Chilean, was half asleep, his wide hat over one ear, his mustachios drooping with languor. Juan Almagro had been a *huaso,* a cowman of the south country about Chillan, but for four years now he had worked as an overseer of *rotoes,* in the dusty tophet of the nitrate mines. With him sat Miles Murdoch, nominally treasurer of the nitrate concern, baked brown and sapless by the merciless sun of the Atacama, an Englishman with fine eyes and mouth cut for laughter but tightened now with strain. With Almagro, Murdoch had come south on the railway merely to see rain again, green things growing, water which might be permitted to trickle without the consternation of appalling waste. Then too there was a chance that Brant Gilvey might come down on the longitudinal.

This was "iodine year" in the nitrate plants—the sixth year when by agreement iodine, the important by-product of the caliche rock, might be produced without overstocking the market. Iodine year meant doubled labor and increased responsibility. The tension showed in Miles Murdoch's nervous gestures, in the restlessness with which he poured small drinks of beer, swallowed them swiftly, poured others. Iodine year—and Northrup dead.

"The hell of it is," Murdoch grumbled for the hundredth time, "the company will send down some half-baked chap full of theories and swank for us to break in."

"If we be not ourselves first heartbroke and back-broke, we break him in," agreed Juan Almagro, showing a row of white teeth.

Without changing a feature or lifting his eyes, Murdoch struck the table with his flat palm. Mechanically the discouraged Englishman who owned the house brought a full bottle of beer dripping from a lukewarm tub, and took away the empty one.

"Brandy—*aji!*" demanded Juan Al-

magro. The landlord nodded. Fifteen years of earthquakes in a listless climate had made him imperturbable. If a *huaso* desired to burn up his vitals with peppery *aji*, let him.

"How about the train?" asked Miles Murdoch.

"Gone south," replied the landlord.

"Brant will come here," Murdoch said, opening the beer on a nail driven with foresight into the corner of the table. "No use hunting him. Too hot."

Juan Almagro nodded, dashing fiery *aji* into his brandy. They drank together dully. Then Almagro slumbered, his vast hat now balanced on a knee. A clock, hung plumb on the sloping wall, ticked monotonously. A cheap American motor truck without tires jingled past loaded with precious rawhide kegs of iodine. Two *rotoes* fought viciously in the sunny space before the door, then abruptly forgot their disagreement and sprawled in the scanty bit of shadow. Miles Murdoch poured beer and swallowed it in small doses.

Then Brant Gilvey came.

In a dusty khaki coat and riding breeches, he tramped in and flung his kit on the floor.

"Greetings and what-the-devil!" he exclaimed, "Reception committee? I'm overcome."

"Take a drink and recover," advised Murdoch grinning thinly. "Fetch a chair—if you can find one with four legs. Wake up, Juan, and join the festivities. His Excellency, the Gillie, arrives."

Almagro straightened instantly, wriggled under his gaudy crimson sash, smiled expansively.

"Ah, the Gilvey is arrive! More brandy, *Señor*."

"This is a post mortem, Brant," Murdoch explained presently, "a grievance committee—or maybe I'd better call it a safety first movement. What's going to break? And which way do we jump?"

"Murdoch, I'm as ignorant as you are," Brant declared. "I beat it back as fast as possible after poor old North was buried. The stockholders will send somebody to take charge of the field undoubtedly. The question is who—and when?"

"The question is—who are the stockholders? North held the heavy interest. What becomes of his stock?"

Brant turned a little gray. "They found a will, Murdoch," he said with difficulty, "leaving everything to a girl—a nameless girl who had lived in his house. The day after he died the girl disappeared."

"With the stock?"

"She knew nothing about it. She wasn't that sort, Murdoch. Not the sort we associate with North. North's lawyers were holding the property when I left."

"More complications. And in the meantime we grind caliche and boil saliter and ship iodine—and pay off until somebody comes along all swelled up with authority and gives us the devil about it."

"I notified the office at Antofagasta," said Brant, pouring some warmish beer and tasting it reluctantly, "but those remittance lads up there know less about the business than we do."

Juan Almagro shrugged a warning shoulder in the direction of the door. "Observe," he cautioned in sibilant Spanish, "His Excellency, the Devil, arrives."

There was a commotion at the door and the two drowsy *rotoes* scrambled awkwardly out of reach as a tall gaunt oldish man with a sun-blackened, sinister face under dry white hair strode in. He was immaculately dressed in brown linen with high shining boots and the wide hat of the Chilean *ranchero*, but the arrogant swing of his body and the straight hard insolence of his stony blue eyes were unmistakably British. A bitter line was slashed deep between his brows and the cut of his mouth was cruel. He walked with the air of an avenger clanking a sword. Brant Gilvey looked at him and hated him afresh. This was Humbert Moore, Northrup's ancient enemy.

"Mail?" demanded Moore of the discouraged landlord.

That individual began rummaging in his rusty safe. Meanwhile Moore turned, met Brant Gilvey's eyes and the look that passed was blue-white with menace. Then the newcomer's eyes changed swiftly and curiously. From contemptuous hate they lightened to a scornful amusement, the lazy mirth of the preying beast before he slays. The landlord, stumbling up with a packet of letters, was startled by a burst of short, terrible laughter. Humbert Moore was laughing at these others, laughing in a superior, insolent bark. Then, thrusting his mail in a pocket, he tramped out.

"His Excellency, the Devil, is amused," remarked Juan Almagro drily. "Brandy, *Señor*—brandy for the love of God.

BRANT GILVEY had jumped up and was glaring after the Britisher as he marched down the glaring street.

"North is dead—and he laughs—the unspeakable hound!"

"North is dead—without having known the pleasure of twisting that fellow's rotten neck," mourned Murdoch. "He must have died reluctantly and with regrets."

"He died content—knowing he had friends," returned Brant. "And yet, Murdoch—they came here twenty years ago friends—and partners."

"Much madness is bred in loneliness," mused Juan Almagro. "Had I myself not come today within sight of green grass, I might have throttled some estimable *amigo* and fed his bones to the vultures. They tell it that Sir Humbert has another white wife."

"Araucanian, probably," argued Murdoch. "No white woman would look at him, they know him as far south as Punta Arenas."

"His white wives always died promptly," said Brant. "Even the first, I've heard only lasted a few years."

"I knew her," said the landlord suddenly, "an American from the province of South Carolina."

"Beautiful?" asked Juan Almagro.

"Beautiful—and tormented," said the landlord.

"Inevitably," added Murdoch. Then he rose. "The train's due up in twenty minutes. Time to move—what?"

"We sleep then at Antofagasta?" Brant inquired.

"So it is arranged," Almagro answered.

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Give shade wanted.....

The white glare of the desert enveloped Brant Gilvey like a friendly cloak. The sand was hard-baked, wind-driven, and the shod forefeet of the three mules clinked on the surface like little anvils. They had left Antofagasta at dawn. No one spoke. The Atacama, rolling like a serried sea to the foot of those bleak ashy hills, drinks a man's thought as the snow crowned Andes wring the seawinds dry. Its silence is alive, haunted. Brant Gilvey let it possess him.

Janvi had torn herself out of his heart leaving a ghostly numbed emptiness. He felt hollow and automatic, a moving shadow in a place of cruelly sharp shadows. He had no concern, no curiosity.

The trail branched beyond the white wound of an abandoned nitrate working and Brant regarded the right hand road without emotion. It led through the ashy hills to the *officina* of Humbert Moore, who had come out from England, a rich, arrogant younger son, two decades since. Northrup, riding past that fork, would have sworn bitter oaths and shaken a fist in the direction of his enemy. But Brant laughed a hard laugh, not unlike Humbert Moore's own. He remembered that laugh later. And then he heard the drums.

Hollow, eerie, without rhythm save the monotonous cadence of repetition, they beat along that right hand road. Brant mopped his face. Why was he always listening for drums? He knew that distant desert sound—Humbert Moore's water barrels rolling homeward from the river, each one jolting along, turning on the crude axis of a driven spike, drawn by a languid burro. All up and down the waterless desert one heard the hollow progress of water casks, the drums of the Atacama. Drums in a white glare!

Days must pass, even when their mornings, noons and nights are as monotonous as so many blue white beads strung on a copper thread. The nitrate crushers roared and caliche clattered dustily through into the boiling vats. *Rotoes* sang and got drunk with equal cheerfulness. And the sour saltpetre reek of drying nitrate lay like ether on the air.

Brant Gilvey rode on muleback over the nitrate fields or bumped in a springless little car drawn by burros on a rusty track out to the farther workings. Heat swam up from the verdureless pampa and danced in mad whorls on the horizon. Nights came suddenly, cold and silent.

Once, riding the Atacama in the flood of a silver moon, he mounted a rise suddenly, where Humbert Moore's road thrust eastward, caught his breath and spurred forward. Ahead, against the drunken tilt of the moon was a figure on horseback—a girl—slender arms upraised, dryad-like, alone. Brant stared, growing cold and dreary. Was he going mad? He dug his mule in the flanks, wheeled about and clattered off. Wherever he looked now he saw her—Janvi—her sweet face under the cloud of soft hair, her mouth, her condemning eyes. In steaming, stinking vats, in fires at night, in the bluewhite drift of the Atacama sand—always the reproach of her eyes. He rode away, forcing himself not to look back.

On a night late in December, he rode back listlessly to the mine to find Murdoch gray-faced and highly excited.

"Hell's broke!" he announced, grimly. "Humbert Moore has got control of North's interest. He's taking charge on the first."

"Humbert Moore?"

"Here's the wire from the Antofagasta office." Dully, hardly comprehending, Brant read the crumpled flimsy.

"But how—how—" he stammered.

"How do I know?" flared Murdoch. "He's got a majority of stock—therefore he must have North's shares. He's elected himself manager. Automatically, being friends of North's—we're fired!"

Brant stood frowning. "But the will—there was a will. The stock couldn't be sold unless the girl was found. North's lawyers promised to protect us."

"Apparently she's found," Murdoch's tone was bitter. At least Moore's in control. Shrewd revenge for the old hellhound, to get North's life work into his hands, rule and ruin, break North's friends—laugh!"

But Brant Gilvey was not listening.

She was found. Janvi was found! Out of darkness, hope. Out of silence, a call. Janvi was found! And Humbert Moore knew where she was!

The brown caliche ringing under the forefeet of his mule, Brant tore down the trail. There was a wild singing in his blood. Moore knew where Janvi was—and Moore should tell him. He would drag the truth from his sneering mouth.

Never in all the years he had ridden the Atacama had he taken the eastward trail. For thirteen miles, worn smooth by the ceaseless turning of Moore's water barrels it twisted through the bleached, furrowed dunes of caliche, back to the *officina*, sprawling under the slope of ashy hills.

TWO miles from Moore's settlement the path mounted suddenly and the lights of the mine working sprinkled the eastern skies like low-flung stars. Brant dug the mule in the ribs and urged him on. The beast scrambled over the rise, stiffened his awkward legs for the descent and then shied suddenly, snorting.

A riderless horse stood in the shadow.

The rider sat where the full whiteness of the moon blazed upon a drift of white rock. Brant stopped, rubbed his eyes, frowned, then slid down. This was no dream. This was no madness. She *was* there—in the moonlight, drawn back defensively, her hand on her crop—she *was* there——

"Janvi!"

His voice was a trumpet blowing triumphantly down the wind.

"Janvi!"

The girl rose, hesitated, took a step.

"Brant?" she called softly, "Brant?"

Brant mounted the shaly dune in one leap.

"Janvi—Oh my girl, my girl! If you knew how I've wanted you—ached for you—prayed God to give you back——"

She came toward him, slowly, slim and lovely in her little riding rig and high boots. Then she was in his arms, her dark hair pressed hard against his rough flannel shirt.

"Oh Brant—you came! You did come!"

"Janvi—I would have come round the world! Tell me you love me—Janvi—nothing else matters!"

"Oh Brant, I do love you! I knew that day—that awful day at St. Veronica's—the day *he* came!"

"Who came, Janvi?"

"My father."

"Your father?"

"I am Sir Humbert Moore's daughter. He came for me—he had the proof. The sisters looked over the papers—his wife was my mother. They told me—and then I remembered."

"Your father? But North took you away, Janvi—why——"

"I don't understand, Brant—and he does not explain. But I remember—things. Everything comes back—the rooms—the white sun—my mother's grave. And the drums. I hear them all day, hollow and weird—the drums of the Atacama. But I don't hate them as she hated them. I love them, Brant—everything—this desert and the hills—it is as though they were old, old friends, born in my blood. I love everything—but *him!*"

Brant remembered the whispers that drifted out from this hidden *officina*. Janvi, then, was the white woman the discouraged landlord had spoken of. His muscles tightened.

"Is he cruel to you, Janvi?"

She sighed and shook her head. "He is civil enough. But he hates me. I can remember his hating me—when I was only four. He called me the Brat then—I am the Brat still. And when he looks at me he laughs, a dreadful, bitter laugh."

"Because he hated North. Because through you he can destroy all that North loved and worked for—wipe out his name, his memory, all that he stood for for fifty years in the Atacama!" Brant was bitter.

She knew nothing of the will. Moore had laid his plans cleverly.

"What can we do?" she asked, when Brant had told her. "He is my father. What can we do?"

"How old are you, Janvi?" Brant asked suddenly.

"Have you forgotten my birthday—January sixth? I shall be twenty-one then."

He saw Humbert Moore's intent. This was December. Not for a mere few days did he propose to control the affairs of Northrup's concern. A permanent dominance, arrogant and triumphant, that was his plan. What was one childlike, convent-taught girl in his path? His daughter! North had known, of course. North had counted on Janvi. But would she stand against her own father, even though he hated her, in defense of North who had loved her?

Poised on the ledge of caliche she stood looking out over the desert. There was a valiant, adventuring buoyancy in her body. Brant had seen North stand like that, drinking in the desert, challenging it, rejoicing in it. He felt a surge of memory. She was like North—the cold niche in his heart which had been kept for North's friendship warmed for her. She compensated.

"Janvi, I love you," he said, softly.

"I know," she gave him her hand.

"I love you—and I have nothing."

She turned and the moon caught her eyes and made them glorious.

"Brant—I love you—and I want nothing."

The moon had gone down when Brant rode back to the mines, rode like a young *khan* of the desert singing strange unmelodious songs.

Murdoch, sitting moodily by a fire, growled at him.

"You must be elated over losing a good job," he muttered. "You'll last about nine seconds when his Excellency, Beelzebub, moves in."

Brant laughed. "I'm not entirely sure that he'll move in, Murdy," he said. "In fact I wouldn't be surprised if he never moved in at all."

"Lord, send it," prayed Murdoch. "There's a letter for you—forgot it."

Brant took up the long envelope. It was yellow, a little dry, the ink thin. It had the look of a message which has been a long time on the way. He opened it curiously.

Within was a single sheet, folded inside a bit of tissue paper, yellow with age. It was a torn scrap of a letter, written in a woman's hand in pale green ink, very faded, very old.

Brant read it numbly.

"North, I want you to have her. He is beginning to hate her—he suspects, I know. She is so precious, a sunny dancing little thing—North, she is like you! I can not last much longer—they tell me smiling lies—but I know. He will give her up gladly—O my love—if I could die against your heart——"

That was all. Brant stared, shaken, at the wavering lines.

It was quite clear to him now—the mystery of Janvi. North's child! The daughter of a woman who had hated the desert and the drums of the Atacama, an unhappy woman—Humbert Moore's wife! Solemnly he laid the letter on the fire. Pale orange tongues licked it into oblivion. Murdoch looked up.

"Funny thing," he said, "when I first looked at that letter I thought it was addressed in North's handwriting."

Brant's skin tightened. He laughed edgily as he thrust the envelope into his pocket and went out. It *was* North's writing on that envelope. It must have been old Macrae who had found the sealed letter and mailed it. So—North had trusted him. North had wanted him to know. He felt warmed, comforted, content, as he had not been since that strange stark silence fell upon them, that night in North's house. It was as though North had breathed a blessing upon them—upon him and Janvi.

For a long time he stood under the stars looking off into the desert.

Then against the ashy gray hills he seemed to see her, poised, winged, challenging—something untamed and gallant and strong in her that belonged to North.

Brant laughed softly.

He knew that North's dreams were safe!

Emeralds and Gold Dust

Continued from page 68

length. Estrella waited silently.

"I had intended to send the Englishman to the cane fields and later to Don José's house," he said slowly. "But you shall have him if you savor your woman's vengeance, Estrella."

The girl bowed her head in thanks. Her father did not mark how the blood crept back into her lips again.

At that moment a servant came onto the terrace bearing a cedar box banded with gold.

"Don José Carnerio sends this to the Governor, and begs him to accept it in token of friendship," he said, placing the box before his master.

It seemed to Estrella that an icy hand was laid upon her heart when Don Fernando, with an exclamation of wonder, drew the emperor's mantle forth and raised it glowing to the light. For she knew the gift evidenced Don José's offer for her hand in marriage.

"A royal gift indeed," the Governor said, his eyes on the great diamond. "It will become you well; and when Don José takes you as his bride to the Court of Spain the Queen herself will have naught that can compare with it."

The girl sat very still. Her eyes were downcast. But her folded hands were pressed in agony together as she said:

"I cannot marry Don José, Father."

Don Fernando frowned.

"I have promised you to him, and I owe Don José much. Indeed he finds you far more beautiful than the picture of you he has long adored. Even in these few days since you came he loves you madly. You will fulfill the obligation I have made for you."

He rose with a gesture of finality, but paused with the mantle in his hand as two men came down the terrace. One was the prince, Galaya; the other, Edward Kingston. With them walked an armed guard; and bitterly did the Inca show his humiliation at their presence. But the Englishman walked with a light step and smiled jauntily across the heads of his captors.

Suddenly, as the men came opposite the terrace, the Inca gave a choked cry, and an involuntary movement of his arm toward the gleaming cloak which Don Fernando held. His rashness brought the guard's hand to his shoulder, and Don Fernando's to his sword.

"How now!" exclaimed his Excellency testily. "Would this slave steal my possessions before my very eyes? An excellent purchase, by my faith. Take him to the courtyard and give him ten lashes. As for the Englishman—" he turned more fully to sweep this acquisition with his contemptuous glance—"let him for the present work in the gardens."

He turned away with a gesture of dismissal, and the girl Estrella, who had sat immobile till now, breathed again freely, so that her breast rose and fell with a long exhalation.

The Englishman's eyes for a second had met hers with curiosity, with searching—a profound regard that was at once clear, grave, swept clean of mockery—full of a strange sweetness.

The enclosed garden of the Governor of Porto Bello was a thing of beauty.

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There giant ferns and towering palms swayed in the ocean breeze, and flowers of the tropics blossomed in brilliant confusion. In the center, a pond, paved and surrounded with mossy flagstones, balanced on its cool green water lily pads and their lotus-like blooms; on the side toward the sea a low stone wall permitted a view of the harbor with its gay craft and stately galleons, their scarlet and yellow silken banners streaming in lazy folds against the hot blue of the sky.

It was in this garden that the Governor's daughter was wont to spend many hours, dispensing with the company of her woman to wander at will in its seclusion, gathering the flowers, playing with her dogs, or in a low seat in the shade busy with book or embroidery. And it was here that the English slave worked among the plants while his guard lounged against the wall.

Since Estrella had presided as mistress in the Governor's household, greater kindness was shown to the dependents and slaves. So when on a hot afternoon she offered to the Englishman's guard a cup of wine, the Spaniard, unsurprised, held it aloft to her good health and drained it at a draught. Presently the lightly drugged wine held the man in thrall; and plucking a flower here and there, Estrella moved toward Kingston.

As she did so a great white lily, choicest of the garden's blooms, fell at her feet and the Englishman's voice came to her ears:

"Flower of my heart—Rose of Castile!"

He knelt upon one knee on the ground over his task, but for a fleeting instant his eyes looked into hers. The words were a mere breath, so faint that the wind scarce carried them to her. But as the girl bent to take up the lily her fingers were unsteady.

"Who are you whom I have bought in the market-place?" she asked, her eyes upon the flower in her hand. "And how came you to such a pass?"

Kingston dropped his work and rose.

"Edward Kingston, of Cornwall in England," he answered her. "It was the quest of adventure that led me to Mexico, and onward toward the rich prizes of the Castle of Gold—to what I then judged misfortune, in that I fell a prisoner to Spain. But that misfortune I judge misfortune no longer. It has led me to you."

AS IF he longed to touch a forbidden thing he held out his hand to her. And indeed she was of a tempting loveliness standing there so close to him, with the shadows flecking her fair skin and the deep pools of her eyes.

"Strange," she said now, with a sudden shyness, "how my thoughts fly like wild birds toward a fair northern land they have never known. And the accent of a foreign speech moves me so sweetly."

Her voice faltered, and slowly she raised in her cupped hands the lily Kingston had given her, and pressed it to her mouth.

When Kingston spoke his voice was deep with a strong emotion.

"What think you were my thoughts as I watched your litter on the long road from Panama?" he said. "Or when I stood in the market-place and you purchased me for a necklace of emeralds. My body you have freed to your service, *doña*. But you have taken in more abject captivity my heart!"

At this moment a knocking came at the gate of the garden, and the guard stirred and sat up rubbing his eyes guiltily. But not before Kingston had dropped to his knees and resumed his task, and the girl had turned aside to reach up for a branch of blossoms growing above her head. An instant later one of the house servants came to the girl to say that a woman of the town was without, bringing a basket of marvellous fine laces for sale.

Before Estrella could refuse, the lace-vendor unbidden was beside her, spreading laces fine as gossamer, exquisite as frostwork, beneath her unwilling eyes. She had been no woman had she failed to respond to their lure; and while she examined the fragile webs, the vendor attracted the attention of the Englishman, then turned to the gate with a distinct message to him to employ himself near it. After the Governor's daughter bought from her some lengths of lace, the woman with voluble thanks raised the basket again to her hip and started toward the gate.

Midway there her heel caught, and she stumbled, falling almost at the feet of Kingston. And he, perforce, must help her to her feet, and return the scattered laces to her basket.

It was during this scene that Don José entered, greeting the sight with jeering laughter.

"A pretty squire of dames, by my faith!" he cried. "So poor a thing that even a woman's bauble can buy his body in the market-place."

Kingston's cheek flushed darkly at the taunt, and Don José observed with satisfaction that he had drawn blood. Yet as the Englishman's eyes met his he was taken aback, so mocking were they, so contemptuous, so full of menace. In another moment the guard motioned the Englishman away, and he departed to another side of the garden.

Then, indeed, Don José turned to the girl ardently, for he had not thought to find her here without even her woman, alone for his wooing. The Spanish customs irked him, and he had no mind to wait till his wedding-day to savor the kisses he craved now. He was not ungraceful as he threw himself on the ground at Estrella's feet, buried his face in the folds of her dress, and poured out a flood of passionate entreaties.

But to the girl it seemed as if the heated words burned into her very flesh; and his fiery avid eyes brought a flush of shame to her cheek. As he rose, and caught her against him, bending his mouth to hers, she pushed him violently from her with what strength she could muster, her hands against his chest.

"Don José Carnerio—Don José Coward!" she cried, her voice high-pitched with terror and with anger. "I hate you—I hate you!"

It was in time to hear these words, and to see her gesture of repulsion, that his Excellency stepped into the garden. His face was dark with wrath as he approached them, but he bowed to the Don with punctilious ceremony, begging him to await within. Alone with his daughter, he reproached her with the savagery of a man balked of his ambitions.

"To-morrow you go into retreat with the nuns," he said bitingly. "And when you have come to your senses your marriage will take place. I have given my word!"

KINGSTON, when he knew he was unobserved, ventured to look at the piece of paper which the lace-vendor had put into his hand. The signature, bold, dashing, and careless, brought a startled light to his eyes. It was that of Henry Morgan, famous pirate chieftain, whose notorious exploits on the Spanish Main had made his name the terror of the Spaniard.

> "To Sir Edward Kingston, Baronet," the letter read. "It has come to our knowledge that you are imprisoned in Porto Bello, in slavery to the Governor. We would free you to share the treasure we shall take when we sack the town, do you but contrive, with the aid of the woman who gives you this, to escape to us with the plans of the fort that she has obtained. She cannot bring them, herself; and there is none save yourself in Porto Bello we can trust."

Morgan. The name sprawled at the bottom of the page with the clarity and terseness with which only the great can invest their signatures. And Kingston stared at it fascinated. Around the paper was folded a thin blank sheet and a fragment of crayon, with instructions that the answer be placed in a certain crevice behind a loose stone in the stable wall.

Kingston made shift to scratch that answer. He agreed to deliver the plans of San Jerome, but instead of a share in the captured booty, he stipulated that his reward be the life and freedom of Estrella, daughter of the Governor, and that Don Fernando be spared if possible. He crumpled Morgan's missive and gnawed it with his teeth into a pulp. His answer he concealed securely against the opportunity to deliver it.

The path to freedom had opened unexpectedly before him, yet he knew he could not take it. He guessed nothing of Estrella's removal to the convent. He thought her in the Governor's palace which he knew would be one of the centers of attack; and although Morgan might promise to protect her, yet he felt it intolerable that he should be away from her when the buccaneers entered Porto Bello. He knew, however, that with his connivance or without it Morgan would attack. Finally he made his decision. He would send Galaya, the young Inca, in his place.

Thus it happened one night that the Inca disappeared from the Governor's household, and with him the priceless feather cloak, the present of Don José. That on the Inca's shoulders the royal mantle belonged by right, and that its loss was deemed by the Indians as a sign of disaster to them none in Porto Bello knew save the captives; and these guarded their secrets with an unalterable impassivity. Treachery there had been, of course. Wax impressions taken and a key forged to the strongbox where the

mantle lay. Much gold too had come from somewhere to bribe a guard to sleep when he should have watched. But even the ordeal of torture failed to disclose the truth concerning all these things.

And meanwhile, Kingston, banished from the garden and unable to see the woman he loved, counted the hours to freedom. Some casual words between two guards had informed him of the Governor's intention to give her in marriage to Don José. He waited restlessly until a note, smuggled to him, told him that Galaya had delivered the plans, and that in a few hours Morgan would attack.

PART of the immense treasure of the Incas lay like the fabled Golden Fleece behind the guarding dragons of the grim walls of the fortress of San Jerome. Yet on this night the eyes of the dragons were dimmed, for the sentries had drunk deep of the drugged wine and the honeyed smiles of a certain black-eyed woman of the town.

But the five hundred men whom Henry Morgan marshaled like shadows under the fortress walls had neither drunk nor slept. Lean and rapacious as wolves they crowded to the attack, and at their head Morgan, the king wolf, most rapacious and crafty of them all, moved sure and relentless. In a single hour the peaceful city became an inferno.

The Spaniards fought desperately in the darkness, but the black night, the terror of the shouting, cursing buccaneers drove them at length to panic-stricken refuge in the surrounding forests. All but a few. The Governor, rallying his depleted garrison about him with such of the fleeing townspeople as he could muster, continued to hold the main fort of San Jerome.

An hour before the attack Edward Kingston was free. With tools provided by the vendor of laces he had long since loosened the bars of his window, and when the guard outside the Governor's palace had reached the end of his beat, the Englishman had already slid noiselessly and lightly to the ground and disappeared in the darkness. A half hour later he joined the buccaneers, and when they stormed the city Kingston was among them. While Morgan and part of his forces still besieged the main fortress, others took possession of the convent, the monastery, and the store-houses.

Kingston was the first to enter the Governor's palace. The place stood unguarded, empty, its rooms in wild confusion, its doors gaping. All the household had taken flight; Estrella among them, as Kingston thought. Either she was with Don Fernando in the fortress of San Jerome, or—and the conjecture froze his blood—in the darkness and the confusion Don José had taken the girl and made his escape from the city. Grim-mouthed, Kingston hastened through the turmoil and battle in the streets to the Spaniard's house.

Here too was emptiness, but order. Lights still burned as at the moment of attack, the sumptuous rooms glowed, untenanted, as though but waiting for the reentrance of the household. Yet no—not quite untenanted. As Kingston in one of the inner chambers was contemplating in amazement a heap of blazing jewels lying on a table, he fancied that a length of tapestry by the door had swayed ever so slightly. In a stride he was before the curtain, seized it, and tore it aside.

Behind the arras a black-robed friar stood immobile, the cowl of his habit over his head and face.

Kingston's sword flashed in one hand as with the other he drew the monk toward the light.

"Put back your hood," he ordered harshly. "I have a mind to see whether a tonsured priest or a craven townsman hides behind that bit of cloth."

With a sharp unexpected gesture the monk endeavored to tear himself from the Englishman's grasp, but the movement, although it freed his arm, still left Kingston in possession of his hand which he retained with a grasp of steel. On the forefinger of that hand was an emerald signet ring that he knew. He had seen it in the market-place at the sale of slaves. He had seen it again in the garden of the Governor's palace. He stepped back two paces, his fingers tightening on his sword, and as he did so the black-robed friar laid hand upon his own concealed blade.

"Draw, Don José," Kingston said quietly. "Strip off your monkish robes and draw. And know you that we fight to this end—that but one of us leaves the room alive."

They fought then, with only their own hard breathing to break the silence; backward and forward, along and across the length of the room. Once Don José was beaten to his knee, but grasping the tapestried curtain beside him pulled himself to his feet and cast the torn embroideries from his hand. Once Kingston stumbled against the table, displacing the heap of jewels which fell in a shower of fire.

It was one of these gems that proved Kingston's undoing, for as he trod, it rolled treacherously beneath his heel. He slipped suddenly, and in recovering himself to parry the thrust aimed at his heart his sword struck so sharply against that of his adversary that it broke at the hilt and fell ringing to the floor.

He stood unarmed while Don José raised his blade to deliver the last blow when a shadow that neither man had seen detached itself from the doorway, and a lithe figure leaped to strike upward the descending steel.

Another moment, and the Spaniard was unarmed, while the newcomer said in smooth, ironic tones:

"Surely, good sir, you would not murder an unarmed adversary."

Don José stood sullen, his darting eyes seeking a way of escape.

"I think I can guess who has come so gallantly to my rescue," Kingston said with a smile. "You are——"

The other man swept off his broad-brimmed hat and bowed deeply.

"Henry Morgan at your service," he answered heartily. "'Twas well for you I had heard report of Don José's riches and came to see them for myself, else were you af this hour a dead man. These jewels we will take now, together with their owner, who, I dare swear, is no jewel."

He grasped a handful of the gems and held them out to Kingston who stepped

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back with a curt gesture of refusal.

"No! Our bargain was otherwise. For my aid in entering the city I asked but one reward—the person of the Governor's daughter."

Morgan measured him with a keen eye, then began to laugh.

"Ah! Sir Edward, so you have whiled away the tedium of your imprisonment by an amour with his Excellency's own daughter. Ha! on my faith that is good indeed."

At that moment two of Morgan's officers entered breathless.

"The town lies at our mercy," was their hurried report. "But the main fortress of San Jerome, held by the Governor and his garrison, has not yet fallen."

Morgan considered a moment, tapping the toe of his boot with the point of his sword. Then he issued his orders.

"Drive out the priests and the nuns and place them before you as a screen. Cause them to set the scaling ladders and to climb upon them, so that if the Spaniards dare fire they will mow down their holy men and women. And stay—take with you this gallant gentleman who fights against a broken sword and place him in the forefront of the battle."

SINCE before dawn the fight about the fortress had raged without ceasing; and now as the first petal-pink streamers of cloud brightened and the sun thrust upward an amber disc through a sea of gold and copper, a strange company marched through the streets toward the walls of San Jerome—priests and nuns come forth to fight an earthly battle. They marched silently, knowing they marched to death, but erectly, their eyes fixed on the rising sun. In their ranks, protected and screened by the nuns about her, a slim girl moved, the hood of her white habit drawn over her head so that little of her face was visible.

A hush fell on besieged and besiegers alike as the buccaneers drove their prisoners onward in full view of the castle walls. In the silence one of the attackers under a white flag went forward and proclaimed to the Governor that unless he surrendered, the holy men and women would be forced upon the walls and ladders as a screen of the besiegers. The Governor stood upon the wall to hear that message.

In the silent company of priests and nuns below him was his daughter, and a spasm of agony passed over his face as he listened. Yet he deemed death better for her than the fate she would suffer at the hands of the buccaneers. In a calm voice he replied that no surrender was possible, and turning to his gunners ordered them to fire.

It was during this truce that Estrella saw Kingston among Morgan's men. It looked to her as if the man she loved was one of Morgan's wild following and she saw how her own act had given him liberty to aid the attackers. An exceeding bitterness rose in her soul, and turning, she scaled the ladder which she had helped to set in place, until she was midway of its length. Behind her pressed the buccaneers and above her a rain of bullets poured. The nuns and priests about her fell backward, wounded and dying, from the walls and others were thrust forward in their place; but the girl, as though she bore a charmed life, stood unharmed. In the press the hood of her habit slipped back from her head and the shining waves of her blue-black hair fell about her like a cloak. She paused upon the ladder facing her enemies and stretched out her arms in the form of a cross, and the rising sun, striking obliquely upon her, turned her into a figure of light.

There was a lull in the fighting. Men crossed themselves, and among them rose a deep murmur like a sudden wind in trees.

"The Madonna! The Madonna!"

Morgan paused, arrested, and Kingston uttered a cry of anguish; then the buccaneers, taking advantage of the momentary confusion among the Spaniards, surged over the wall and gained the top.

Estrella felt herself falling and struggled no longer. Strong arms caught her and bore her up and away. When she lifted her weary lids at length, she was once more in the Governor's palace and Henry Morgan was bending over her.

"My father!" she cried wildly, starting up. Morgan shook his head.

"I would have saved him if I could. Thrice I offered him quarter but he would not surrender. And, so fighting, a musket ball reached his heart."

The girl was silent. Tears pressed against her eyelids and fell slowly on her clasped hands. After a while she looked up.

"You are Henry Morgan," she said. "Were there any to ransom me would you let me go free?"

Again Morgan shook his head in denial, this time with a smile.

"Madam," he said with a great show of gallantry, "much as I regret to hold you unwillingly you are the fairest treasure I have found in Porto Bello, and I would be loth to part with you. In truth, I had thought to give you to Sir Kingston—until I saw you——" and he told the girl of Kingston's stipulation as to her safety.

Then indeed a great joy took possession of Estrella to hear the rôle that Kingston had played in the capture of the city; and even in the fear and terror of the moment, her face shone.

Morgan approached her and made to encircle her with his arm when a loud knocking was heard at the door. The guard stationed without the threshold begged leave to admit a messenger.

There entered a young and stately man, splendid as a bronze statue. He carried in his hand a box of polished wood, and addressed Morgan in Spanish.

"The Incas have received their prince unharmed and with him the sacred mantle without which our dynasty would perish. In gratitude we send to the Englishman Kingston great treasure in gold-dust, and these jewels."

As he opened the box there blazed forth a green fire, so lustrous were the great emeralds with which it was filled.

Morgan spoke to one of the guards at the door:

"Have Sir Edward Kingston brought in."

When Kingston entered it was as a prisoner. His hands were bound behind him. He looked into Morgan's eyes with a passion of anger.

"Among Englishmen a word is a bond." His voice cut like a sword. "I had heard that Henry Morgan's word once given was never broken."

Although Morgan flushed darkly at the insult he remained impassive; and the Englishman realized the futility of his anger.

Desperately Kingston sought a way to move him; and as the Indian brought the jewels to his side with a word of explanation, he offered them to the buccaneer.

"Will you take these in ransom for the woman who is your prisoner?"

Morgan laughed uproariously.

"There are gold and jewels enough for an emperor in Porto Bello, and mine for the taking," he made answer.

"Then in honor will you loose my hands, give me a sword, and fight me for what is already mine?" cried Kingston.

"In sooth, Sir Edward," Morgan answered without heat, "I do not wish you ill. But in this case I do not find my pleasure accords with yours. Can you not be satisfied with these jewels and as much gold as you can take from Porto Bello? I offer you wealth and your freedom."

"You offer me death," said Kingston, and stood white-faced.

Morgan turned to the girl, sweeping his hat to the ground before her.

"Madam," he said, with a vein of seriousness in his gay mockery, "you have heard the words of two gentlemen. Now it behooves you to make your choice as free and high-born lady should!—I offer you wealth and power greater than many kingdoms—if you will marry me, madam."

Estrella raised her eyes to his. She realized the hollowness of the choice he gave her; knew that his courtly persuasiveness might quickly change to wrath did she refuse him. But bravely she spoke the words that were in her heart.

"Morgan, now dare I swear that you have never loved; for had you, you had not thought that wealth and power could tip the balances when love was weighed against them. What were the power over light and darkness to a lover, whose light is other than that which shines on all men, and whose night is the darkness of separation."

THE girl paused, shaken, and to Kingston she turned her eyes longingly. Morgan remained for a time silent after her words.

He was cruel yet gallant, treacherous yet brave, dauntless, swaggering, rapacious, by turns cut-throat and gentleman, but deep-buried in him was chivalry and a certain nobility.

When he looked up at length, his feeling was masked under his familiar mocking smile.

"Your eloquence persuades me that I have never loved, madam," he said lightly. "And loth were I to meddle in matters I do not understand." And going to Kingston, with a stroke of his dagger he severed the Englishman's bonds.

"Kingston, you are free. I redeem my promise to you. It is Harry Morgan's way."

And still with an inscrutable smile on his lips he passed from the room.

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her slim, boneless figure, the tilt of her nose, the devilish quality of her knowing, boyish smile, the rakish fluff of her bobbed hair, fascinated—and sometimes shocked—the Nine Mile.

All more or less Bohemian themselves, they regarded one another with frank suspicion. They were a motley crowd, the Nine Mile homesteaders—motley and multi-minded. They had come to the West for many reasons: to gain back broken health; to find peace in the purple quiet of the sage-brush mesas; to make a little money after the restless manner of their kind; and to seek adventure, to follow the lure of the shining unknown. Rich and poor, young and old, from city and from farm, they came, bringing their harlequin treasures and scattering their flimsy shacks down the valley of a land that had never been tamed.

Washerwomen and dope fiends lived on adjoining claims. A prima donna and a prize-fighter drew their water from the same spring. A moody young novelist seeking local color looked from one window upon the violet majesty of the Big Horn Mountains, and from the other upon the littered back yard and numerous progeny of an Italian immigrant family.

For all the reasons in the world, the strange company had trooped into the Nine Mile.

Fiji had come because some one had said she couldn't. A challenge was a red flag to her. She had been nearly expelled from college twice because she had not been able to look a dare in the face and say it nay. So she and Mildred, who was only the merest shade less foolhardy than herself, had come out from their dignified home town in a little car that they called "Leaping Dandruff"—because it was shedding its paint—and had landed in the surprised but not unwilling arms of the Wyoming hill country, to spend the six months in the cactus waste.

HOMESTEADING, which had seemed such a glorious lark when suggested by a lazy, white-flanneled youth lounging under the vines of Fiji's ancestral veranda, proved to be grueling labor.

At first it had rather frightened her, and had almost cowed her bright spirits; but with characteristic effrontery she had rallied and had stuck out a brazen little tongue at the sneering hills. For other women were homesteading: tired women, older women than Fiji, frailer, smaller and, she had reflected optimistically, not half so good-looking.

Mildred was an able lieutenant—dark, pretty, vivacious, a fairly decent cook and a genius with the budget. She had only one fault in Fiji's critical eyes: she was engaged. Not that this would necessarily win that young person's disapproval—she had been engaged three times herself—but Mildred was so terribly engaged.

"She is engaged to one of these tall, calm, masterful brutes, who will want all the seeds taken out of his grapefruit," she graphically explained that evening to Katherine Claridge and her mother—two metropolites who had come to the Nine Mile in the pursuit of health, and who lived in the nearest cabin to the east.

"How well I know that kind," sighed Mrs. Claridge, an incorrigible coquette at forty-five. "Do tell me, does his tie match the border of his handkerchief?"

Fiji winked at her joyously. "Brown bread and baked beans for Saturday night dinners," she contributed. Then, catching Mildred's eye, she added in hasty fairness: "But he is good-looking—much more soothing to the weary optics than any of my flames. And he hands out one of these mean lines about wanting to protect you. He's the kind that calls a girl 'Little Woman.'"

"He does not!" cried Mildred, flaming beneath her tan.

"Awfully quaint, you know," continued Fiji in her indifferent drawl, "but not so bad when backed up by his six-cylinder good looks. Sort of startling, in fact. I've no objection at all to Kenneth except for his influence on Mid. He disapproves of our homestead—draws down his classical eyebrows and elevates his Renaissance nose. Now good, hot disapproval only peps me up, but it has a depressing effect on Mildred. I think she secretly pines to go back home and be protected."

"How's Kelly?" inquired Katherine, taking pity on Mildred and seeking to turn the tide of banter. Kelly was the youth who occupied a more or less problematical place in Fiji's affections and whose jibes had inspired the pilgrimage to Wyoming.

"Oh yes, Kelly," seconded Mrs. Claridge breathlessly. "I don't know when I've heard of such an exciting young man." Fiji's casual amours never ceased to thrill her.

"Oh yes, Kelly," echoed Fiji good-naturedly, "the last I heard from the sweet thing he was still looking for a career. He's considering the law now I believe—this is June, isn't it? He was an architect in May. All during April he wrote poetry. In July he will probably take up real estate and by August he'll be studying plumbing."

"I think it's wonderful for men to change their minds like that," sighed Mrs. Claridge. "Mr. Claridge never could."

"Oh, Kelly's versatile," agreed Fiji reminiscently, "darned versatile."

"It's a good thing his father has money," Mildred maliciously pointed out.

Fiji received this bomb with unruffled complacency. "Mildred is firmly convinced that I'm going to marry Kelly," she informed the Claridges, "and she has horrible visions of his dad disowning him before he gets his mind made up, leaving him with me and six children to support. She is tortured with visions of me taking in scrubbing while he walks the streets trying to think of a profession."

They laughed appreciatively at the thought of Fiji bowing her ornamental curls over a scrub mop, when Mildred suddenly thought of the most recent alternative.

"Fiji's got a new sweetie," she explained mischievously. "Found him today!"

"Here? Where? Did she pick one up out of the sage-brush?" The Claridges showed the interest common to those who

"Had my Mother only told me..."

By ETHEL K. BANNISTER, *Graduate Nurse*

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live where events are numbered and news scarce.

"She just came riding into camp," narrated Mildred with relish, "in the arms of a perfectly delicious cow-puncher—the handsomest thing——"

"Name's Jim," interpolated the heroine of the adventure.

"A great, huge cow-puncher," continued Mildred impressively, "with chaps an' everything. Oh, he was ravishing! He stayed to tea and ate everything we had."

Fiji affected a bashful smirk. "He just rushed me off my feet," she simpered.

She scrutinized the photograph of Kelly Reeves long and earnestly that evening after returning to the little cabin. His was the largest picture in the widest silver frame. An engaging youth with charming, crooked features, he smiled whimsically down at the girl with tousled hair. Not even Kelly's mother, had she been a lady of truthful bent, could have called him handsome, but there was something gay and impudent about him that never failed to win the feminine heart.

"You're not so worse," Fiji assured his picture, "but why the dickens should I get poetic about you?"

Whereupon she sat down and wrote him a letter. Mildred, on the other side of the table, penned her nightly epistle to the protecting Kenneth.

Dear Kelly:

I've just met the most ripping man, a real cow-puncher who owns several thousand vicious looking cows. He's a perfect demi-god, a sort of cross between a centaur and caveman. I've suddenly found that I like Wyoming much better than I thought I would. Homesteading is a perfectly wonderful life and I'm crazy about being a daughter of the soil. Do hope you like the Law. Don't let thoughts of me distract you. Yours with love and all that rot.

FIJI.

P. S. I think the cow-puncher is quite wild about me, though of course I haven't encouraged him. I was never one to flirt.

A week later Kelly Reeve's answer came and Fiji's small foot squirmed in its boot as she devoured his bold writing. The letter, like his smile, was wholly captivating.

My Prairie Queen:

Dear Madam, your latest communication is at hand and leaves me tearing my hair, which, of course, is what you intended, Viper. I note your casual reference to the beautiful brute you have captured, half centaur, half caveman. My dear, restrain yourself. You are no mate for him. To corral such a specimen, you should be able to tear a strong ox limb from limb and use its horns for hair pins—if your hair were long enough. Better stick to lawyers, nice safe ones who hate raw meat. Better think the proposition over, old fruit, and let me know at your earliest convenience. I am glad you like the farm. How I envy you your simple joys, your pastoral frolics.

Life here is still as effete and boresome as ever. Had a jolly tennis game yesterday—Marian Lane and myself against Ted and Molly. We won, of course. Marian's stroke is improveing wonderfully since I've taken charge of her. Last night the Vandiver set threw a party at the Greenville Hotel and Marian and I were invited. Wonderful floor, wonderful women and what not. Of course I missed you, Viper. Marian's too tall to make moonlights really effective. She's a peach, though, and was a knockout last night—had some sort of silver thing wrapped around her—you know.

Well, be good, Chérie, and don't let thoughts of me distract you from your farming.

Yours lawfully,

KELLY.

"The brute," foamed Fiji, thrusting the letter back in its envelope, "trying to make me jealous, is he? Thinks I'll come dashing home just because he brags about Marian's tennis stroke. The poor, emaciated, asinine prune!" She shook her head so savagely that every blond curl rose up and danced a frantic jig.

"Whatever in the world is the matter?" demanded Mildred, looking up dewy-eyed from the tender sentiments that Kenneth had penned. "Has Kelly got a new profession on the string?"

"No, darn him!" said Fiji with venom. "He's just raving about tennis and dancing to make me mad. He knows how they bore me."

"Yes?" intoned Mildred absently, her eyes darting back to the page she held in her hand.

"He's dragging Marian Lane around," continued Fiji, "and they went to a dance the other night at the Grenville. Marian wore that cloth of silver gown, her aunt sent her from Bordeaux. She must have looked marvellous—her figure, you know! Do you remember how Barney Haynes always insisted she looked like a Greek statue? Oh gosh, Mid, wouldn't you love to climb into some togs and go to an honest-to-God dance once more?"

A KNOCK sounded on the door, and with a single bound Fiji reached it and threw it open. Framed in the sunlight stood the splendid figure of the cow-puncher, like a colorful picture from some Western romance, with his chaps and his spurs and the clear bronze of his face.

"Jim!" caroled the small girl he confronted, "if you knew how welcome you are you'd die of conceit. Come on in an' play."

"Can't stop," smiled the tall man, "just loped over to see if you'd do me a favor."

"Can't marry you today," said Fiji, wrinkling an impudent nose at him. "Too darned busy. Anything else?"

"Well," said the cow-puncher, "I don't know how a dance stacks up alongside matrimony, but I'm willin' to substitute this once. There's goin' to be some waltzin' and merry-makin' at Antelope tomorrow, and some of us boys thought maybe you girls wouldn't mind takin' it in. It's a real respectable dance."

"A dance!" shrieked Fiji, clasping his arm in rapture. "Mildred, did you hear what I heard? Jim, do you think the cowboys will dance with us?"

"They'll tramp all over each other tryin' to get to you."

"It's a go," she accepted, "shake on it, Jim."

When he had ridden out of sight she leaped for the pen and paper. "Wait till I write this to Kelly," she chuckled.

The dance, Fiji told the Claridges, was delicious. The Odd Fellows' Hall of

Antelope was arrayed in festoons of red-white-and-blue and streamers of emerald green—relics of the town's two most historic occasions: last Fourth of July's barbecue dance and the St. Patrick's Day ball.

The crowd was a hodgepodge: wiry little ranch women, bustling in importantly, laden with baskets; big-eyed children tugging at their skirts; long rangemen, coatless, but invariably boasting the glory of a vest, their leathery faces accented by sweeping mustaches; awkward ranch boys in high-topped boots and hands scraped violently clean; engineers in corduroys; musicians in plaid shirts and old Dad Thompson, quadrille announcer, in a Prince Albert.

The country belles were there in all their loveliness, pretty, sun-burned faces and brown arms contrasting oddly with the rainbow tints of frocks.

The "boys" of the Lazy V proved to be the ultimate in hosts. Concertedly and forcefully they proffered their attentions. In regiments and companies they besieged for dances. They were amazingly light on their feet, these long, supple horsemen, and moved with the trained grace of athletes. They danced the old steps—waltzes, two-steps, quadrilles, varsoviana, polka and schottische—the vigorous, light-hearted steps that had come to the country with the cattle barons and had clung tenaciously to these remote corners through the storms of successive generations.

They were astonishing conversationalists, too. What they lacked in Kelly's and Kenneth's finesse, they made up in ardor and orginality. "I've swallowed so much line tonight I feel like a tape worm," Fiji confided to Mildred as she borrowed her powder-puff.

Jim Harris handed Fiji about with a quaint assumption of proprietorship. His manner puzzled and intrigued her. Faint amusement was uppermost in his expression; under that an honest and hearty admiration; and still deeper, showing only faintly in brief glimpses, lay the wariness of a skilled fencer, a man who has found an opponent worthy of his steel, but deserving fine tactics.

He paid rather marked attention, she noted, to the little daughter of a cattleman, a girl scarcely more than a child, with a thin, eager young body; a tender slip of a thing, the very curve of whose tilted cheek expressed adoration for the handsome man who led her.

Fiji asked him about her artlessly in a moment when they stood together.

"That's Jobyna Watt," he said, his gaze softening as he looked after the girlish figure. "She's old Avery Watt's daughter. He owns the A Bar A outfit. Has a heap of cattle in one place and another. She's an awful good kid, and I've romped with her since she was twelve years old. Pretty, ain't she?"

"Adorable," confirmed Fiji warmly. But she caught the girl's eyes fixed on her once, and discerned in the hazel gaze an admiration tinged with a vague hostility.

"She's jealous," diagnosed the older girl, and was swept by a momentary pity.

The dance lasted until daybreak, for the roads were villainous and no one dared them in the dark. When the rose-washed gray of dawn slipped into the waiting hollows of the hill-land, the musicians laid away their instruments, the mothers cuffed sleeping children into wraps and the men went out to crank the line of Fords that ranged outside the door. Some few cow-punchers, clinging to old ways, donned chaps and rode away on broncos.

"What a dance! What a dance!" Fiji wrote Kelly. "What men! Five of them proposed, but I didn't accept any of them, as I recall. However, if I did take one of them up in an absent-minded moment, what shall I do? I'm so helpless about such things!"

To which Kelly satisfactorily responded: "Poison him. It would make a ripping story—the 'Blonde Borgia of the Badlands.'"

THE little house was full of cow-punchers after that, and a line of patient ponies trailed their reins outside the cabin door. With mystifying frequency, the "herd" wandered to the Nine Mile. At every hour of the day there would be a rap at the door and some dusty horseman would be disclosed, hat in hand.

"Happened to be hunting cattle over this way," he would hastily explain. In evenings they came in bevies, the wet coats of their horses testifying to their ardor and impatience. The queer little room that was both a parlor and a kitchen rang with their spurs, and the demure chintz chairs learned to sag with the weight of big men. The phonograph screamed forth jazz, and occasionally some centaur tore his allegiance from the waltz and let Fiji initiate him into the mysteries of the fox-trot.

There were many gay little meals after that, and long, moon-drenched evenings with the Nine Mile smiling in silver flood. Sometimes the Bohemian homesteaders sought out the scene of gayety and mingled with the cow-punchers on the mutual ground of pleasure. In calico and corduroy, meticulous Easterner and easy-going rancher, aristocrat and democrat, they rubbed elbows in the tiny shack in a happy heterogeneity that comes only to the Nine Mile.

Dreamily they lingered over the fudge that Mildred made, and swayed rhythmic shoulders to the plaintive airs Fiji plucked from her ukulele. They sang sometimes; roaring college songs, love songs, popular songs, with occasionally the high tenor of a cowboy song swelling out to the night, fraught with the cry of the wolf and the stir of the pines. And all the time the well-groomed faces of Kelly and Kenneth and other gentlemen of their ilk smiled down from their silver frames, a little sardonic perhaps, and more than a little envious.

There were more moonlight rides to dances forty miles away, and steak fries in the eerie hills at midnight. Jim Harris was always in the foreground of these gatherings. He it was who brought dewy clusters of wild roses and great heaps of creamy yucca for the table. It was he who, smothered in an apron, gravely beat the fudge and spread the cheese on crackers. He was always at Fiji's elbow, his blue eyes dwelling half-humorously, half-tenderly on the blond riot that was her hair.

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"It's awful comical stuff," he said once, gently pulling a curl that spilled down over one ear.

"Silly," Fiji had agreed complacently.

But that night Mildred had taken her to task. "You shouldn't lead him on, Fiji," she scolded. "These men are different from the ones we've always known. They take things seriously. They're really big children in a lot of ways—even if they are witty and amusing. Why, last night I had to get cross with Shorty. He kissed me, and he really meant it—he wasn't just doing it as part of the game. Jim's a darling, and it stands to reason he's getting crazy about you. But really, dear, he's not your kind. You could never be happy with him, and yet he's too fine to hurt."

Fiji thoughtfully submerged her face in a mask of cold cream before she inquired: "How do you know but what he's leading *me* on?"

Mildred threw her a startled glance. "You—you aren't falling for him, are you?" she asked in a panicky voice.

Fiji shrugged. "How do I know?" she demanded irritably. "He does give me a thrill—kinda."

But she wrote a long letter to Kelly that night, her eyes wandering often to his crooked smile in the silver frame. It was after a particularly long scrutiny of his photograph that she attached an impulsive postscript to the letter. "I do like you, Kelly," she wrote childishly.

And the next morning, when Jim Harris made his picturesque appearance at the door, she asked him to bring Jobyna Watt to the cabin dance the crowd had planned for Saturday night.

"She's so pretty—something awfully attractive about her—and we know so few girls," she explained somewhat lamely for her usually glib self.

But the man nodded understandingly, an eager light on his face.

"Sure I'll bring Jobyna—she'll be tickled to come," he had promised heartily. "She said up at the North Fork dance that she'd like to know you girls."

THINGS had an amazing way of happening in the West, Fiji found. They happened so rapidly and so engrossingly as the summer months slid into space that she found her hours crowded into moments and her letters to Kelly were often long delayed.

But she found time to frown at the things he wrote. His letters were for the main charming descriptions of his easy, graceful life. He was finding the law to his liking, it seemed, but his studies left him ample time to cultivate the social graces. There were many games of tennis with Marian, Fiji noted—fair Marian whose stroke was steadily improving. And there were dances, fêtes, masked balls and once a house party. Marian had worn a green bathing-suit on the latter occasion, it seemed.

"It's lonesome without you, Viper," Kelly always concluded his letters. "There's no one can fight like you can. I think we were born to be sparring partners."

The cabin dance was the sort of success every hostess dreams about. It was a farewell dance in a way, for the haunting Western autumn had slipped abruptly over the Nine Mile. The cow-punchers would leave next week for the great fall round-ups, and the summer dwellers on the homesteads were on the wing for a gentler and friendlier clime. They had heard dread stories of winter in Wyoming, and they had a horror of seeing their flower-strewn playground locked in the white tomb of the snows.

It was a busy evening for Fiji and Mildred, energetic hostesses that they were, and they found little time for reflection or observation. Fiji noted, however, that Jobyna Watt had come, as pretty as before and as touchingly awkward, with something starry in her face.

Jim was doing his duty by her, it was easily seen, dancing with her often and listening to all she said. Fiji smiled tenderly—dear Jim, trying to make the plainly-dressed child happy because she had asked him to. A gentleman, there.

It was the sort of evening when young pulses leap high and the dancing current of flirtation veers toward deep eddies.

Fiji felt a strange thrill mounting over her when she danced her last dance with Jim. There was an excitement in his manner that was contagious, although he said little until the music stopped. Then, with a queer shyness for a man who had been so bold, he asked hesitantly: "Will you go horseback ridin' with me tomorrow, Fiji? I'd kinda like to talk to you about a lot of things, an' it'll be my last chance to see you before the round-up."

"Benvenuto and I will be waiting by the cowshed," she assured him.

"You're a good kid," he said suddenly, catching her shoulders in his sinewy hands, "and you're a straight shooter!"

"Damned glad," countered Fiji, flirting her curls in his face.

His hands tightened on her shoulders. "Don't swear!" he said sharply, giving her a little shake. "Somehow I can't stand to hear a girl cuss."

"Sounds like Hell!" she agreed sweetly. "You're a great caveman, Jim," she continued, gently disengaging the hands that gripped her shoulders, "but you can't make me give up my vocabulary. It's taken me twenty years to learn it."

He smiled at that and pulled a curl. "I'll lope over some time tomorrow afternoon," he promised, and went out to cinch Jobyna's horse.

Jobyna herself was radiant when dawn broke up the dancing.

"I've had a wonderful time," she said demurely enough, but an elixir of happiness ran through the primness of her words. Fiji noted suddenly that the girl was like the wild roses of the Nine Mile—dwarfed a little and clinging to the sod, but surprisingly vivid and deep.

"What a mess we've got to clean," she sighed when the last Ford had pounded into the distance and the last hoof-beat had subsided. "Don't let me forget to write to Kelly in the morning. I've thought of the most screaming thing to tell him. Isn't it criminal the way I've neglected him?"

She wrote to Kelly in the morning. But not the letter she had anticipated. The hand that held the fountain pen moved leadenly and the face that bent above it was serious and a little pale.

For a passing homesteader had brought

out the mail and had put into Fiji's hand an unexpected letter. It was from a school-girl friend, typical of its kind, gossipy and exclamatory.

"Of course you've heard the latest!" it began. "Marian Lane's engaged! A diamond as big as a house, my dear! She hasn't announced it formally yet, but of course we all know it's Kelly. They've been simply inseparable this summer and Kelly has been studying law like fury for the last four months. You know it's something desperate when he sticks to anything that long."

At first, Fiji had been too hurt to be bitter. She had walked over to Kelly's silver-framed photograph and had stood in a sort of daze before his charming, crooked smile.

"Kelly!" she had whispered.

But pride soon rushed in—pride and anger and mockery. It was she who had scorned an engagement in the spring. It was she who had insisted they test their affection with absence, she who had argued jauntily for freedom.

"I hate engagements," she had told Kelly. "They're so much like mortgages." Well—they had had freedom. And Kelly had taken advantage of his.

Scorn shook her. Why had he been such a coward? Why couldn't he have told her? Why had he kept his letters bantering and affectionate to the last, speaking of Marian in only the most casual manner? Why had he waited to let her learn the news from an outsider, a giggling, fluttering, slightly malicious outsider? She couldn't believe it of him—Kelly who had been so sweet, so loyal. She shut her eyes to keep out the memory of his face.

But pride finally triumphed over all else. Her chin went up and her small back was very straight as she took up pen and paper.

"Kelly dear," she wrote sportingly, "I've just heard the news and I want to tell you how beautiful I think it is. Marian is a wonderful girl and I'm sure you'll make her happy. You deserve the best there is, Kelly, the very best. When is the wedding going to take place? Don't you want me to come back and be your best man?" It had taken nerve to write that last line. She marveled at herself as she sealed and stamped the envelope with steady hands. But, as she wrote his name, she felt curiously lonely. What, after all, was a world without Kelly?

A hundred memories of him flocked over her. Kelly swimming, skating, dancing with her; Kelly kneeling on the driveway to tie her oxford lace; Kelly carrying her across streams on their gypsy tramps; Kelly boxing her ears when she teased him and lightly holding her wrist when coaching her in a tennis game. There was memory of Kelly who had stood by her in her college escapades and who had saved her from drowning once. And there were several rather pretty little memories of Kelly connected with moonlight nights and rambler roses on a trellis.

Jim rode up in the afternoon, and at the sight of him a hard little gleam came into Fiji's long, gray eyes. After all, why not? If Kelly had been a quitter, why couldn't she? Perhaps she did love Jim a little, anyway. He was handsomer than Kelly, and more inscrutable. And she had been distinctly thrilled when she danced with him last night. He had the quality of being picturesque. Who wouldn't forgive a man his grammar when he was picturesque? She had remembered that, half banteringly, she had told him she would marry him for saving her life the day they met. There was deviltry in her eyes as the horses struck out across the Nine Mile that had changed from lavender to gold with the coming of autumn.

"Let's stop at McLellan's mail box," she suggested. "They're going to Antelope tomorrow and I have a letter to mail. I want it to get off as soon as possible."

THEY rode all afternoon, and stopped at sunset on a high ridge that looked over a dozen curving valleys to the mountains. In painted glory the sun sank, leaving fire-tipped clouds to mark his passing. It was then that the tall cowpuncher told her the things in his mind.

"You know," he said haltingly, crooking one knee about the saddle-horn, "you've come to mean a lot to me, Fiji."

"That's—nice," murmured the girl, smiling at him provocatively.

"You're different from other girls," he added. "You're just as easy to get along with as the fellows in the bunk house, clean-spoken and always ready to josh. And yet you're like a girl too, with your helplessness and your funny hair. An' you're—you're so darn sympathetic too."

"You're saying a lot of nice things about me, Jim," said Fiji, laying her hand for an instant on his arm. "Would you be willing to recommend me if I should need a job some time?"

He caught her hand and gripped it. "I'd do anything in the world for you, pardner," he assured her huskily. "I sure owe a lot to you. I reckon I'll never live long enough to pay you back."

"Why, Jim, why—why this ovation?" she baited shyly.

"Everything," he answered, "and you was so smooth about it, too. You saw I was about to make a fool of myself over you an' you knew it wouldn't do. You knew we wasn't made for each other an' could never grow to be. You talk and act and think different from me. You're a little higher breed of animal than I am. So you threw me and Jobyna together 'cause you saw before I did that her and I was meant for each other. We speak the same language. We both knows what a yearlin' is, an' how to weather a hard winter on the range. Jobyna has never learned to want nothin' I can't give her. And after all, she's my kind of girl. Her folks followed the cattle up out of Texas the same as mine done. I—I guess I'm gonna marry her, Fiji."

"You found this out at the dance?" asked Fiji, remembering dully that she had compared Jobyna to a wild rose.

"On the way over," he corrected. "Of course I got to thinkin' about it when you asked me to bring her. It was kind of a shock to find how tickled I was. I've always loved Jobyna I guess, but it took you to show me for sure. I've got to earn a stake an' she's got to do some growin' up before we can get married, but—some day we'll go lopin' off together, I reckon. An' I'm sure a heap

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grateful to you. You're the squarest girl I've ever knowed!"

"At least," said Fiji, in a last bitter effort at laughter, when she unsaddled Benvenuto that night, "I've smashed a world's record. I'm the only living girl who's been jilted twice in one day."

IT WAS a week later that she crushed her thumb. Hastily she snatched it from under the hammer and groaned, cuddling the injured member in the other hand. It was mangled looking and would bleed, she noted with a shudder. Horrible, horrible. A few thick, red drops crawled sluggishly from under the loosened nail. With the blazing sun beating down and the wounded thumb sending white-sick waves all over her, she suddenly felt terribly forlorn.

Her ear was caught by the throaty purr of a high-powered car—no homesteader car, she reflected dizzily. They always drove Fords. Her thumb sent another twinge up her shoulder.

"I'm getting tired of it," she sobbed suddenly. "Last week I got my face scratched with barbed wire, and yesterday a snake tried to bite me. And I'm so full of splinters I feel like a porcupine. I'm—I'm tired!" Tears welled up in her eyes and spilled over.

The purring of the car grew nearer and huskier and a low-slung speedster rounded the curve. Fiji, arrested, blinked away the tears and stared.

"Kelly!" she breathed.

He saw her, stopped, leaped out. She tried not to surrender too abruptly, and flung him her old gamin grin.

"Welcome to the plantation!" she called jauntily, and held out her hand. Since it was her right thumb that was crushed she extended her left hand. Kelly took it but he also calmly reached for the other. Then he saw the telltale thumb and understood the tears that streaked her face.

"You stubborn little devil," he exclaimed tenderly. "You ought to be spanked!"

"It's not polite," chided Fiji, forcing her lips to smile. "To what do I owe the honor of this visit, Kelly?"

"To that idiotic letter you wrote me. Where did you get the insane idea I was engaged to Marian?"

"Why—why you are!" faltered Fiji, "Dolly wrote me that you were. Said Marian had a diamond as big as a house."

"She has," said Kelly calmly, "but I didn't pay for it—thank heaven. Barney Haynes footed the bill for that sparkler. They've been engaged all summer, but kept it secret because her family has been rather high-hat toward Barney. He went to Alaska with his uncle last spring and I promised him I would give Marian a good time while he was gone—and you were exercising your fatal fascinations on the natives of Wyoming. By the way, dearest child, your face is dirty."

"I don't give a damn," said Fiji, not quite daring to look up.

He seized her firmly by the shoulders. "Look here," he commanded, "I'm going to make you cut out swearing."

"All right," sobbed Fiji, suddenly collapsing against his broad chest, "I always did think it was a man's work, anyway!"

A Skyscraper Man—Continued from page 39

that a pair of black eyes, tear-splashed, watched him out of sight.

Never dreaming that Maybelle was crouching in a heap under the counter where no one could see her, crying. Oh, gee! She wished she hadn't talked like that! When everybody else was down on him, too. And s'pose he never came back?

Yeah, but lookin' at it another way, s'pose . . .

All this, of course, Bill didn't know.

He turned into the congestion of Howard Street, his hat pulled over a black frown. In front of a labor agency knots of men stood staring at the chalked blackboards. Carpenters Wanted. Section Hands. Waiters. Camp Cooks. They elbowed Bill Rand and fiercely he elbowed back. Damn Bohunks. Gettin' in such a sweat over a few measly jobs.

A man came out with a stub of chalk in his hand. Gardeners, he wrote in sprawling white letters. Drivers. Loaders. Expert Riveters—— Wincing, Bill turned away.

Maybelle'd called him yellow. Yellow—he tugged his cap lower with an angry jerk and turned back.

"Say, that last thing you wrote on the board——"

"Engineer's helper? Well?"

Willie-boy, was he? Hung around skirts in the daytime? All right. He'd show her. He wasn't afraid o' work.

"I'd like to take a try at it," Bill said.

BILL RAND emptied his pail of gray water into the hopper in the cleaning supplies closet at the end of the hall and stood his mop on end. Better do the brass next, he guessed; he'd just have time before he went down to read the oil gauge. He stuffed the polishing rag into his overall pocket and took the can of metal polish off the shelf.

Shinin' brass. Gosh! What a helluva job for a he-man! Shinin' brass and swabbin' floors. The boilers was different. If he c'd get his hands on the valves oftener it wouldn't be so bad. There was a kick to that engine room, clean as a dish, with three great boilers roarin' sweet as you please. He liked the flare of the light, the feel of the heat on his face. Like old times, the blast of it against his skin. Where he was now, he was ashamed. Assistant engineer. Sounded swell when you said it fast. Assistant-engineer-in-a-twenty-story-office-buildin'. But it didn't hold water when you saw the gray mop and the cleaning rags and the can of metal polish. Handy man was more like it. Handy man!

Say, wouldn't he hate to have the gang know? Nobody knew. Not even Maybelle. Nobody was ever goin' to know he had gone in to get the rivetin' job that'd show Maybelle where she got off at, and had taken a job as—janitor! That's what it was.

Seemed funny though. Here he was not more'n a block from the Silver Star,

and Maybelle's orange-drink stand, and yet for all the talkin' they'd done since that day he mighta been in China! Well, that was O. K. with him. He was done with Maybelle. He never even thought about her any more. O' course night-times, when he happened to be walkin' past her flat and saw her through the window, it got him kinda. The blood started knockin' in his forehead the way it used to. But most times he never thought of her at all.

He never thought of her at all!

The brass was gleaming now. Bill gathered up his can and the cleaning rags and returned them to the closet. Better go down and have a look at the boilers.

The basement was hot and dim and full of a steady roaring. Something came at him out of the shadows, something small and rumpled that opened a three-cornered mouth and miaowed up at him soundlessly. Bill stooped. The kitten raised a trembling, ratlike tail and shaped another ghostly miaow. Well, waddya know! Scabby-lookin' little devil. Where'd it come from, he wondered? Fur roughed up like the wind'd been blowin' it. One eye sore, too. Say! The thing couldn't a' looked worse if it'd been in the ash-can! Tait'd never stand for havin' it around. He'd have to chuck it into the alley; somebody'd pick it up maybe.

The noon whistle blew shrilly. Bill got his lunch box and sat down against the boiler room wall. He'd give the little devil a hand-out first. Kinda mean to throw it out hungry. Lookit the way it got its teeth into that bit of meat.

Fed, the kitten flexed little white nails against Bill's jumper, yawned widely and curled up beside him. He poked at it with his forefinger. It was shaking like it would fall to pieces. Bill bent an ear—the son-of-a-gun! The little homeless half-starved son-of-a-gun! It was purrin'! Chuck that darn cat out in an alley? He couldn't see it.

And so Bill Rand acquired a friend.

It wasn't so hard to keep the kitten out of Tait's way. On the days when the head engineer was gone it followed Bill around the warm boiler room, and when he worked on the upper floors the kitten went with him, riding up in the freight elevator tucked into the front of Bill's jumper.

So the kitten stayed and became sleek and shiny. Its sore eye healed. It grew playful, making great lunges at the gray strands of the mop, chasing its tail around in circles while Bill oiled woodwork or fixed faucets or tightened doorknobs.

IT WAS a month after the kitten came that Tait spoke to Bill about the top floor suite.

"Know that string o' five rooms up there on the south side? Been vacant nearly a year? Well, fella's movin' in.

Bill nodded.

"He's fetchin' in his stuff after six tonight. I was up lookin' it over just now. The windows are fierce. You better take a run up there and swab 'em down." Tait turned away, whistling.

"Say, wait a minute!" Bill's mouth was suddenly dry. "You—you mean you want me to wash them windows?"

"Sure."

"I—nobody said nothin' about window washin' when I took the job."

"Hell!" Tait spat into the red pit of the burner. "What you goin' to do, turn swell on me? It's too late to get hold o' the regular cleaners and them windows gotta be washed."

Tait hooked his thumbs into his overall straps and rocked on his heels. "We-ell? You doin' 'em, Rand, or am I gettin' another helper, huh?"

Bill Rand shrugged. "I'm doin' 'em," he told Tait.

When he came out of the storeroom with the pail and the chamois-skin and the squeegee, the kitten followed him. Oh well, he might as well take it along. It'd be something to hold his eyes inside the pane.

He unlocked the outer door of the suite and set the kitten on the floor. It scampered after him down the hall to where the sun was streaming in over the low, broad sills. Bill put down his pail and rolled back his sleeves. Two windows in each room—ten that'd mean, in all. Ten windows two hundred feet above the street.

Well, s'pose he did throw up this job? He'd be a quitter, but who'd know? Who'd care? Nobody. He hadn't a friend on earth . . .

Bill wrung out his chamois slowly. After all he needn't get in such a stew about it. There was the safety belts and the two strong iron hooks. It wasn't as if he had to get out there on the sill without 'em. He'd do the insides first . . .

When the insides of the panes were shining, Bill went to the hopper in the hall and changed the water in his pail. He strapped the wide leather belt around his middle, testing it carefully. Something was beginning to shake inside of him. Very slowly he shoved up the lower sash of the first window, stretched to hook the belt into one of the staples, then, flattening himself against the frame, into the second. There. No use in feelin' like he did. He was safe. He couldn't fall.

Gee! Looka the way his hand shook on the squeegee. He hadn't even let himself look down and here he was cold sweat all over! There was one window done, top and bottom. He unhooked the belt, inched his leg in over the sill and felt the good floor under his feet. He was shiverin' like a pup! Well, nine more to do.

It was when he was on the next to the last that the thing happened. Like a flash it was, so that afterward Bill could only remember the swift pat of small black paws against his shoe, then the frantic scrabble of the paws, unsheathed now and clutching as the kitten slipped down over the sill. Struggling. Whirling. Trying to right itself.

Bill's heart stopped. Lacey! Whirling like that through space. He swayed against the frame, sick and cold. The poor little devil. God! The poor little devil! His hands shook and fumbled with the safety belt as he sprawled over the sill into the room.

In a moment or two he tried to lean out and look but nausea gripped him so that he could only crouch there with his head buried in his folded arms. It wouldn't make much of a spot, he guessed, smashed against the pavement

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twenty floors below. He couldn't look.

And yet something drew him. He held tight to the sides of the frame at last, and leaned out. The faint roar of the street came to him, the whine of klaxons, the rumble of cars. He craned his neck. Something moving caught his eyes. Something that crept along an eight-inch ledge half a dozen feet below his reach.

Bill drew back his head and shoulders. Well, what was he goin' to do about it? There was the kitten—how the thing'd caught there was more'n he could tell, but there it was—what was he goin' to do? He called to it, and the kitten raised a piteous little face and cried out to him soundlessly. Damn the thing. No use tryin' to get out there on that ledge. He shuddered.

S'pose he was to just let it alone, wouldn't it get down somehow? Or if it didn't—it wouldn't be any worse off than if it hadn't made that lucky grab for the ledge. Would it? Sure it wouldn't!

He picked up his pail and his squeegee. He wouldn't finish that other window. To-morrow he'd slip up early and get it done. He'd get outa here. The thought o' that damn little cat down there openin' its mouth without a sound comin' out made him sick.

He'd take one more look. Maybe it was—gone—a'ready.

He peered down over the sill. The kitten looked at him out of wild gray-blue eyes and framed a silent cry. Say, why couldn't the thing *yell?* It wouldn't be so bad if it'd let out a screech or two—like it could take care of itself. This way though, openin' its yap all the time without a sound comin' out, made you feel——

Oh, hell!

Say, what a fool he was! Easy there. His hand could slip, all wet with sweat that way. Take it slow. Safety belt'd come in handy if they'da been somethin' to hook it to. Damn that cat! Edge along a coupla feet now and he'd have it—— There!

Better rest a minute there on the ledge. Shut your eyes, squeeze 'em tight shut. Don't look. Press back against the stone—steady. God! The times when he used to run—*run* along the girders and never even think about the ground below! Why if he was to open his eyes now——

If he was to open his eyes——

And suddenly Bill Rand realized that they were open. Realized with a relief that was as keen and sharp as pain that he was looking down into the teeming street below—was standing there on the wind-swept ledge with the kitten warm against his chest, and looking down on the street cars clanging by and on the tops of automobiles and on the slow-moving stream of folks along the sidewalks.

Bill's breath came fast. Why say, what'd come over him? It wasn't much to do—climin' out of a window after a darn little cat—and yet it had made him feel different. Safe! Like doin' it had stretched a ladder between him and the ground, between him and folks, closin' the gap that'd got him so.

High above the street, with the wind whipping at his hair and pressing all around him, Bill shook his head slowly.

Erect, whistling a little as he went, the kitten cupped against his side, he walked back along the ledge and climbed into the open window.

THEY were raising steel on the top of old Nob Hill. Fast, too—why they'd run up two floors since the last time he was here, sneakin' around at knockin'-off time, watchin' the fellas leave, pretendin' to himself it was only to see how fast the work was gettin' along that he'd come all that way.

A face poked over the girders.

Bill Rand waved his arm. "Wait a minute," he shouted. "I'm comin' up!"

That was Art McGeoghan—foreman on the job. Bill saw him waiting at the head of the ladder. He spat when he saw Bill come up over the top. "Well, I'll be damned!" he said. "Boys! Waddya know? Here's Rand."

"H'lo, McGeoghan." Bill walked straight to him across the three-inch beam. "Come to find out when I c'n go back to work," he said.

"T' hell y' say!" Under the foreman's level stare Bill threw back his head and returned his look with steady eyes. "T'hell y'say! Well, d'yuh want to start right now, 'r will tomorra mornin' suit yuh, Mister Rand?"

Bill Rand squared his shoulders. "Oh, tomorrow'll do, I guess," he told McGeoghan calmly. "Got som'p'n to attend to right now."

Just as easy as that, it was! Just as easy as that and he'd been afraid. Say, he'd like to see anythin' get him on the run again. He'd like to see it! Som'p'n to attend to, he'd told McGeoghan—well, he'd 'tend to it, all right.

The fat cigar clerk from the shop next door was leaning on the counter when Bill strode up to Maybelle's stand. Bill shoved him aside.

"Beat it," he said tersely. And reached over the counter to set his fingers close on Maybelle's wrist.

"Say, lis'n, kid," he told her, "you're comin' to the show with me to-night, get me? Th' early show—'cause I'm goin' back on steel in the mornin' an' gonna need my sleep."

Gosh! The way her eyes flew wide and shiny like somebody'd lit up a candle in each of 'em. She was stutterin' too, like she had a hundred words all jumbled around inside her cute little mouth, so's she couldn't say a one of 'em but could only stand there twistin' her hands together and lookin' at him.

"Maybelle——"

"Bill!" And she'd called him a Willie-boy.

Something squirmed against his side. He fished it out and set it on the counter. It wasn't much bigger'n a blot there on the counter.

"Bill—a kitten!"

Bill Rand shoved his cap to one side. "Look pretty slick lappin' up milk in our new kitchen, won't it, kid?" His voice suddenly went husky, his fingers were gentle on her wrist. "You 'n me 'n the kitten in a swell little flat, huh? Huh?"

But even though Maybelle's answer was smothered in the kitten's fur it didn't bother Bill. Bother him? Sa-ay! Nothin' was ever gonna bother him fr'm now on. He'd come back.

The Princess and the Bunk

Continued from page 31

admitted that. But if Kane wouldn't change the ending she had another idea. What of creating a totally new part, one better suited to her gifts? A young girl, one of the Queen's ladies in waiting—a sort of fifth-century flapper, awfully jazzy and *cute*, you know—who would attract Launcelot's notice early in the first reel and by the end of the sixth completely console him for Guinevere's retirement into the convent. She liked the idea of that rôle. She felt sure she could do a great deal with it.

Kane shook his head dubiously. Not that there lodged any doubt in his mind that the part of dashing little court vamp was far better suited to Miss Blair's peculiar endowments, but he wasn't altogether confident of Miss Blair's ability to improve the original story. Furthermore, what was he to do with the part of Queen Guinevere?

THROUGH the half-opened window a spring breeze played fitfully. In sheer wilfulness it rustled a few papers on Kane's desk. It stirred the soft lace about Miss Blair's neck. Perversely enough it reminded Miss Blair of an appointment at the Ritz just when she would have preferred to remain with Kane. Coming a bit closer to help matters, she smiled coaxingly at him: "You will fix the story my way, like a dear?"

But the spring breeze had not ruffled Kane's judgment.

"I'm not at all sure," he began as he patted the proffered hand, fatherly-wise, and opened the door to his outer office. Then he stopped abruptly.

Al Roche had just come in the door and at his side, cool, slender, irreproachable, stood a girl whose beauty, even to Kane's surfeited glance, came with keen force. She was dressed in—but what's the use—he didn't get that far! A certain indefinable quality of charm riveted and held his glance for an indiscreet space during which time you could have counted five—during which time Al Roche was saying, "Can I see you, Mr. Kane?"—during which time his brain performed three revolutions, turned two somersaults, and he remembered suddenly the unfortunate Princess of Russia and more especially her valuable publicity, while he nodded with his usual poise and said, "I'll be with you in a few moments,"—during which time Beatrice Blair eyed the newcomer appraisingly, coolly calculating the enemy's strength, nothing, woman-like, lisle stockings, mended gloves, good features, hair—well she couldn't be sure about the hair under that shabby, stupid hat, but she was sure, quite sure, there was something about the girl that she did not like, though as yet she was a little uncertain as to just what it was. All of this took exactly one twentieth of a minute. Meanwhile, Kane had opened the door of his private office a trifle wider, patted Miss Blair's hand once more, and now with his very kindliest smile he repeated to her, "I'm not at all sure, but I rather think I *will* be able to fix the scenario as you wish."

"You are a dear," she cooed, and betook herself, lace, mascaro, rouge, and all, off to the Ritz for tea.

During the interlude Miss Bazaroff stood apart, quietly waiting. At Miss Blair's departure Roche stepped forward, and with a curious flourish of his hand, intended doubtless to register the last note of social correctness, he pronounced his own simple formula for introduction: "Er—er—Mr. Kane—meet Miss Bazaroff."

With an assured artistic finjsh Kane bowed, twelve years of the Broadway stage to his rescue. Then, as he smiled straight into the eyes of Miss Bazaroff, Edward S. Kane, sophisticate of sophisticates, was vibrantly conscious of her subtle distinction. He remembered the picture from the newspaper: "Grand Duchess Maria Nicholaevna, third daughter of the house of Romanof." Struck to life she stood before him, a superb protest against all the commonplaces of this world.

And there Al Roche was at it again. "Er—er—I've just had a little talk with Miss Bazaroff and she thinks she would like to do something in pictures." His head to one side, he gave a broad, meaning wink at Kane, and touched his finger to his lips, wirelessing in simple, one-syllable sign-language, "Mum on her real identity. Not safe to let on yet." Then, smiling to Miss Bazaroff, he continued: "Mr. Kane's the man for you to see. He's big chief round here."

For once in his thirty odd years Kane felt that modesty might be the best policy. He flushed up and expostulated mildly. Not until Al Roche had withdrawn and Miss Bazaroff was ensconced in the leather chair opposite his desk did he feel entirely at ease.

Then he settled to the business on hand.

"Have you had any previous experience in—er—motion pictures?" He deliberately eschewed the word movies, feeling it was not quite adequate for the occasion.

Her eyes met his directly. "No, none at all."

"And how about the stage?" Kane pressed, going through the usual formula to make the interview appear commonplace.

"No. No experience in theatricals of any sort." She pronounced "theatricals" charmingly, with an odd foreign flavor to her "a's" but with no other trace of an accent. Once, years before, Kane had known a Russian boy in a cheap stock company with an accent somewhat similar; only, Kane reflected, it hadn't sounded nearly so delightful.

But quite oblivious to Kane's roving memory, Miss Bazaroff repeated: "I've had no experience," and smiled so disarmingly at Kane that even if he had not already made up his mind to engage her, he would have, forthwith. "I can offer, should you consider me, only the will to work and perhaps—who can tell?—some little talent."

To Kane the whole affair seemed oddly at variance with the eternal fitness of things, and he suddenly hated the un-

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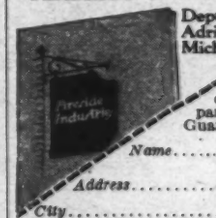

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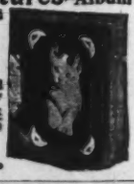

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blushing commercialism of it. This Princess of the blood, with once a hundred people at her beck and call, her slightest whim a royal command—this Princess was now asking Edward S. Kane for a job in the movies! Well, business was business.

"I'm going to try an experiment," he began with his slow, friendly smile. "You want a chance. I'll give it to you. Somehow I rather think you may be a good bet."

He hadn't expected Miss Bazaroff to fall upon his neck in thanksgiving at this point and accordingly he wasn't disappointed. She sat quite aloof and unperturbed by his prophecy just as he would have predicted.

"I'd rather use fresh marble," he ruminated, "than chisel over another's mistakes." He looked at Miss Bazaroff with a kindness he did not have to feign. "All you have to do is to make yourself plastic—pliable—mobile." Kane emphasized each word with a vague airy gesture.

Miss Bazaroff—for so we may as well call her—sat forward, really interested. "I will put myself completely in your hands," she said with simplicity.

Kane nodded, most matter-of-fact. He touched on the question of salary as tactfully as possible, saying, "Suppose we put it at some very nominal figure for the present, and wait to talk business until we see how things develop?"

She nodded in agreement. Then, despite the soft breath of spring through the office window, Kane in his most business-like manner began to outline to Miss Bazaroff the details of her part—the part of Queen Guinevere in "Woman's Virtue."

BUT just the same it happened. You can believe the sage stars of heaven in joint congress assembled had so conspired and decreed. You can believe that the scrawny old Fates at their Wednesday afternoon knitting circle grew tired of gossiping of this fellow, Kane's, outrageous assurance with women, and militantly decided to end it, whereupon they'd dropped two stitches, picked up three, and Kane's doom was sealed. You can believe it was mere accident plus springtime plus an exquisite pair of eyes and an odd flat manner of pronouncing one's a's—that's a matter for you to speculate upon. But explain it as you may, the fact remains. Kane was in love. Every classical symptom of the divine flame was present—or rather every symptom except one, for Kane himself didn't suspect it.

You don't believe it? Well, then, take the first day on the set. It was the throne-room set at Camelot. A stiff, heavily gilded chair upon a wooden dais draped with crimson was doing its level best to register medieval splendor. The Cooper Hewitt lights were glaring brightly. It seemed as though the art and the electric department of the Fine Art Foto Corporation had risen to the occasion. Yet when Kane arrived on the set he looked around critically and made up his mind that it looked like "the bunk." In fact, in no uncertain language he expressed himself to that effect to the manager of the art department.

Distributed on the side lines, meekly awaiting their call to action, stood thirty tin knights recruited from Broadway. Each had overheard Kane say that the set looked like the bunk. And yet an hour later when the studio manager came down in person to lend what assistance he could, Kane told him pleasantly that he thought the set would do well enough. Meanwhile, not a single prop had been altered. But note this, fifteen minutes earlier Miss Bazaroff had appeared, magnificent in the silver brocade and pearl-embroidered head-dress of Guinevere. And when she had mounted the throne at Kane's direction the tawdry set had been transfigured. What had seemed gilt was gold, and what had seemed wood was marble. Miss Bazaroff was a figure apart, every inch a queen.

Nor with it Kane alone who felt the new Guinevere's power. There were sporadic outbursts on the set of "Say, ain't she the class!" "Some royal pippen!" "Wow, for the knights of Arthur's court!" and similar exalted tributes. Kane, overhearing the comment, felt a glow of immense satisfaction. He reasoned that as usual, his judgment had been correct.

It was only Beatrice Blair who had any criticism to offer. As she was leaving the set that afternoon, she stopped to ask lightly:

"Say, where'd you rake up the little Queen? Not bad looking, but absolutely no talent."

Kane raised his eyebrows a dignified fraction of an inch. "It's rather too early to judge yet."

Beatrice blew rings of cigaret smoke and smiled. A few days before she'd seen him dismiss an actor after a five minute taste of his art. But she didn't really suspect that Kane had fallen. After a two-month siege she was sure he was quite immune.

Kane's recording angel might have noted down—that is, if recording angels report that early—that he was ferociously unsociable in the early morning. Inside three weeks he fired one camera boy, three electricians, and two property men, and had called down individually and collectively every member of his unit—and all before the magic hour of ten. Then, let it be known, the clouds scattered, and his good-natured smile appeared. Miss Bazaroff had arrived.

Then one day an event, trifling in itself, awakened him to the shadow of tragedy that lingered about her, a shadow not to be dispelled by the artificial sunlight of the studio. It happened just after lunch hour. A few of the electricians were standing about talking. Suddenly their voices rose in heated argument. Angry babble for a few moments. Then one, the leader apparently, turned to the others and said sneeringly: "Aw, he's a Bolshevik. Dat's what he is!" The answer was sullen: "Say there, can't a guy believe in a just retoin for woik 'out bein' one of them Russian Bolsheviks?"

Kane's eyes sought Miss Bazaroff. She had been sitting within earshot of the group. He saw her rise, and cross to a distant part of the set. Poor girl!

That night in the solitude of his Fifty-seventh Street apartment Kane stretched on a lounge and tried to tempt relaxation. But he could not banish the thought of her, of her quiet dignity when the careless talk of Bolshevism reopened old

wounds. What terrific feeling must lie beneath that restraint.

Whatever had been the sins of Czarism, it seemed an insolent injustice that Miss Bazaroff must pay. And, after all, what was the matter with the old régime? Autocracy? The mailed fist? His experience in handling ignorant mobs of supes had given him keener insight into the Russian problem than the average. He wondered if her empire had passed irrevocably into the hands of the insurgents. Perhaps the people would awaken to their blunder. Perhaps even now they were waiting for a leader to restore the old régime. But leaders did not happen every day.

The thought fired Kane's imagination. What an opportunity for a man whose abilities lay along that line, a man accustomed to dominate crowds, to handle difficult situations. His friends called him a born director . . .

In fancy he saw himself in the royal palace in Moscow. He was standing by a long window, looking on a square. Almost he could see the weaving crowds before him, almost catch the noise of their acclaim . . .

Princess Maria was beside him. She turned toward him. "I can never repay you," she was saying.

Whereupon Kane laughed at his fancies, poured himself a brandy and soda and fell to work with a savage zeal to revise the last sequence of "Woman's Virtue."

IT WAS not until after long weeks of pounding work, that the truth dawned —or rather smashed—upon him.

The day had started with a misunderstanding with Sir Launcelot. That knight, sad to say, had displayed very poor taste in his interpretation of the big farewell scene with Queen Guinevere. Kane hadn't hesitated to tell him so. Kane had said, in short, that if he were really the finished actor he claimed to be, it should not be necessary for him to paw Queen Guinevere in order to register his pleadings. Meekly Sir Launcelot had clanked his helmet in agreement and withdrawn. But in the second take of the scene—darn him!—if he hadn't done the very same thing. Kane's chair went over in his storm of indignation, his megaphone landed twenty feet across the studio floor. Only the incalculable force of his reputation restrained him from breaking Launcelot's tin helmet over his wooden head.

Thus had the day started. It took Beatrice Blair to finish it in style. She was playing a boudoir scene with Queen Guinevere. According to the script, she was to insinuate herself into the confidence of the Queen and learn what she could of Guinevere's intrigue with Launcelot. The scene was to be played by a series of those simple, ingenuous picture devices known technically as close-ups. There was to be a close-up of Miss Blair smiling her meaning questions, followed by a close-up of Miss Bazaroff innocently answering. Close-up of the queen gushing forth in girlish confidence. Close-up of Miss Blair—close-ups *ad infinitum*.

Nine had been taken of Miss Blair before Kane even commenced with Miss Bazaroff. There was Beatrice smiling meaningly, speaking insinuatingly, glancing significantly, ogling, cautioning—her lips forming words with the tedious precision of a kindergarten instructor. At last Kane started in with Miss Bazaroff. He had directed two when he happened to catch Beatrice's eye. She was looking sullenly at him. Two more close-ups of Miss Bazaroff. Beatrice's glance was hawk-like and intense. As he started to direct the fifth, Beatrice drew him aside. Her snapping black eyes, of which her publicity manager was forever writing, were snapping their snappiest just now.

"Look here!" she began, her voice metallic. "Who's the lead in this picture, anyhow? You've only given me nine close-ups in this scene and you've given that green actress five already."

Kane's manner was disarming: "Why, Beatrice, I'd supposed that we all had the ultimate success of this picture at heart——"

But Beatrice was in no mood for peace. "Success of the picture—*Rot!* Success of that Bazaroff girl, you mean. Anyone with half an eye could see you've fallen so hard it's left you dizzy." Having hurled her thunder, she trailed off to her dressing room.

Kane meant to laugh very heartily at her absurdity. In fact, he began a series of sounds that might have been reckoned as such, but quite suddenly a formless disquietude invaded him. His laugh sounded empty. With an unfamiliar heartquake he knew that Beatrice Blair was right. He glanced around to reassure himself that no one had overheard her. It would not do to have anyone know that he, Edward Kane, was in love. Fortunately, everyone had been out of earshot.

Mechanically he went on with the business of directing Miss Bazaroff's close-ups.

"Now this time register pensiveness. You've just been asked when last you saw Sir Launcelot. You're reminiscing—far away in thought. Remember you're in love—get it now—deeply in love."

Promptly Miss Bazaroff's eyes softened to exquisite tenderness. Starlight and springtime were tangled in her smile.

"That's wonderful!" Kane's manner was business-like. "Ready, camera!"

But by lunch time the strain had begun to tell. He addressed Miss Bazaroff with unwonted hesitancy, he felt an unfamiliar intoxication when she was near. He was on edge, nervous, and at the first chance he fled to the quiet of his private office, glad to be alone.

"Great guns!" he said to himself. "Just one more take of that scene where she was weeping, and I swear I'd have taken her in my arms. You've got to shake out of this, Kane, old man. Remember, she's a princess."

Through the glamor of his day dreams one fact emerged clear and urgent. The picture was near completion. He must finish it at once. In its speedy termination lay his only salvation. Beatrice Blair was upset, and he knew that his intentions toward Princess Maria Nicholaevna, third daughter of the house of Romanof, were far too acquisitional for a thorough-going business relationship. Nor, in the studio world, did he wish to play the rôle of sighing lover.

His assistant director hurried to the office in answer to his summons.

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ule," Kane said. "This picture ought to be through by now. Our tournament scene has been up for days. Do you think you could round up our regular cast, hustle Al Roche into getting three hundred extras for to-night and have everything set for me to shoot the tournay stuff by eight o'clock sharp?"

The assistant director was startled into assent. All afternoon he ordered, conferred, telephoned, cursed, jollied, bullied, ran circles, spent dizzy thousands. But by eight o'clock sharp the cast, in mild bad humor was assembled. The gala scene of the tournay was ablaze with sunlight arcs and "spots" ready for action.

ON a rough wooden platform near the cameras stood Mr. Kane. He was trying to keep a critical eye on the set and instruct his camera men. Having some attention to spare, he listened to Al Roche, who had dropped in for a look around.

"Say, Kane, the whole studio's gone clean mad over your work in this picture. Looks like it's going to be even better than 'The Female of the Species.'"

"Oh, I don't know about that." Kane was always inclined to be modest before the first-night critics had had their say. Afterwards, when the critics had been kind, he was prone to explain with what care he had planned this or that effect.

"It's great stuff. And this er—Miss Bazaroff. I saw the president the other day and he's cuckoo about her. Say, by the way, had time yet to sound her out about that contract with the Fine Art? The office would like things cinched at once."

Kane's assistant director was awaiting for orders.

"Sorry, Roche, can't talk right now. Wait around a bit till we're through."

To his assistant he confided for the fifth time: "Now we've got to snap into it. I've business to attend to when I finish here. Fill up that side gallery with your extras for the long shots."

At that particular moment he caught sight of Launcelot talking with great animation to Miss Bazaroff.

"Hold on!" he shouted to his rapidly receding aide. "Get Launcelot and all your knights lined up for the big procession at once.". It was not until Kane saw Sir Launcelot march off to work that he was willing to proceed.

Miss Bazaroff crossed over near the platform and sat down in the chair reserved for Kane. He flung her his pleasantest smile. He heard with unbelievable pleasure her voice, all linked honey and clover:

"Do you mind my using your chair until you're ready for me?"

Of course he didn't mind. She might have asked him to start out for the Pole in a Ford, or see that prohibition was enforced.

Orders clicked forth in sharp efficiency. Knights gallantly rode forth to the applause of the mob. Cameras cranked steadily away.

"Now ready for our shots of the Princess—I mean Queen Guinevere!" commanded Kane to his assistant. "And where's Miss Blair?"

Miss Blair was nowhere about. When after diligent searching she was unearthed amid the smoke and ruins of some thirty odd cigarets, she emerged as sulky as Achilles from his tent.

On the set cameras were in position, Kane ready, and Miss Bazaroff seated waiting for her in the royal division of the gallery. Beatrice Blair offered no excuse for her tardiness. With a frigid nod to Kane she mounted the steps that led to her seat beside the Queen. Miss Bazaroff leaned forward to speak to her, but her friendliness met no answering response in Beatrice. Kane understood, of course. He looked whole volumes of understanding in the direction of Miss Bazaroff until he realized Miss Blair was watching him.

"Cat," he thought to himself. Aloud he said, "Come on, Beatrice. See the pretty birdie! Three takes now and we'll be through. I want a good shot of you two watching the tournament. Point out some event in the field and let's see some enthusiasm!"

In half an hour the cameras turned on their last foot of film for "Woman's Virtue." Extras, certain they would be needed no longer, straggled away. The electricians commenced knocking out the lights. The assistant director registered one last burst of activity as he ran about giving his final instructions. And Kane gave a sigh of boundless relief that the picture was done and that there remained for him only to sound out Princess Maria about the contract with the Fine Art Foto Corporation.

Beatrice Blair and Miss Bazaroff were just leaving the royal box as he crossed to the foot of the stairs. "Miss Bazaroff, if it's convenient, I'd like to see you before you leave."

Miss Bazaroff nodded assent and hastened to descend the stairs. Beatrice hastened also. The steps were almost dark by now, but not so dark as Beatrice's humor. Quite casually and unnoticed she thrust her foot before Miss Bazaroff. "That's it—run to papa," she said acidly.

Now Beatrice's foot was not very small, a fact much bemoaned in private, and her move was unexpected. The Princess flushed and turned indignantly to Miss Blair, and quite as Miss Blair had hoped she missed her footing.

Kane never knew how it happened—but suddenly he was springing up the balcony steps, three at a time, and before the Princess had fallen he had her firmly in his arms. For that moment Beatrice Blair and the rest of the studio world ceased to exist. In gorgeous madness he pressed the Princess to him.

"You—you aren't hurt, are you—dear?" The "dear" slipped out before he could stop it.

She did not answer. He thought—though he wasn't quite sure—that Princess Maria, third daughter of the house of Romanof, snuggled a bit closer in his arms.

"Idiot," he said to himself. But Princess Maria's head was certainly resting on his shoulder.

Then she caught her breath and opened her eyes. There was no hauteur in her manner. She spoke very slowly and gravely as one who states a regrettable fact: "I'm quite all right now."

She straightened herself to prove it and readjusted the head-dress that had slid to a most unregal angle. But though she behaved in every way like a perfectly

normal princess, Kane insisted on helping her to her dressing-room.

There he lingered. Princess Maria seemed in no hurry either. "You said you had something to say to me?" she asked.

"Oh yes," Kane answered absently. "It's the question of a contract for you." He swore to himself that a shade of disappointment crossed her face.

"I suppose you know there are certain rumors floating around as to your identity," he went on.

Princess Maria wrinkled her brow in perplexity. "Do tell me—what are they?" Her maddening blue eyes were smiling and she came a bit closer. It was rash in a princess. It was rash in Edward Kane, but the bonds of self control had snapped. A delicious vertigo took possession of him. He caught her hand to his lips, while his head kept drumming, "Oh Lord, if only she were not a princess!"

Then, far off down the corridor, he heard Al Roche calling: "Say, any of you fellows know where I can find Mr. Kane?"

The effect was electrical. The world was recreated in that instant and with it custom and rank and foolish reason. He pulled himself up sharply. The smile had died out of Miss Bazaroff's eyes. She looked pensive and infinitely far away.

With an effort at mock gallantry, Kane bowed low. "A thousand pardons, Princess Maria," he said.

The pensiveness vanished. The blue eyes twinkled.

"Oh, that's the bunk!" said Miss Bazaroff sweetly. "Tell me, did any one really believe that stuff?"

Now, Kane had not achieved what he had in life by being a fool. Incredulity, wonder and relief broke over him in dizzying waves, but he answered steadily:

"No, I didn't swallow it—though some did, I believe. But that's not the point—" He paused to smile as Miss Bazaroff pushed her head-dress back to a jauntier and more comfortable angle. "The really important matter is—will you take dinner with me to-morrow at eight?"

"I think I'd love to," said the erstwhile Princess.

AL ROCHE had wasted forty-five minutes looking for Kane. His perseverence was nearing exhaustion when he ran straight into him strolling down the corridor that led from Miss Bazaroff's dressing-room.

"Say what's the good word on that contract, old man?"

Kane stopped and patted Roche's shoulder. "The contract's right enough. You know, of course, she isn't a princess?"

"What?" ejaculated Roche.

"Come off, Roche—don't tell me you ever really believed that stuff. The girl wanted a job in the movies and hadn't been able to get one. She looked like a picture she'd seen of this Russian Princess and she had a bright idea. She managed to put it over on Puddin' and felt encouraged enough to try us. But I didn't think anyone else fell for that nonsense."

Roche scratched his head in perplexity. "Great Scott!" he ejaculated. "You certainly do know women!"

Zero—Continued from page 50

front of him. Legs apart and arms akimbo, he surveyed Peter dispassionately.

"I'll say this much for you—you're no fool," he remarked. "Most men would have made a grand-stand play—and got themselves plugged."

Peter said nothing. He was trying to adjust his mind to the new order of things, racking his brain for a solution.

"Well, why don't you say something?" the stranger demanded.

He thrust his face within a foot of Peter's as if to intimidate him by its ugliness, but Peter was too dazed to be intimidated. He only saw that the man's face was blotched and loathsome, and that his small, pig-like eyes were set close under a porcine brow. His whole face seemed to come to a point where his mouth and nose met, and the latter was peppered with enlarged pores. Involuntarily, Peter moved his head to one side.

When he did not reply, the stranger crossed to the bunk above which Peter's loaded rifle hung. He broke the gun, took out the shells and stuck them in his pocket. The empty rifle he put in the corner. Next, he searched Peter for weapons. Finding none, his eyes roved about the room and came to rest on the electric fan above Peter's head.

"All the comforts of home," he remarked with a crooked grin.

He lumbered about the cabin, turned back the bed clothes, examined the cupboards and explored dark corners. On a shelf he found a quart of brandy which the department had supplied Peter, for medicinal purposes, two months earlier. The government seal was still unbroken.

"Bonded goods, eh?" With the butt of his pistol the stranger knocked the neck off the bottle, poured himself half a pannikin full, and gulped the stuff down. As he tilted his head back, the sinews of his leathery neck stood out like whip cords.

"Pretty fair stuff," he said, smacking heavy lips. "It'll help pass away a tedious afternoon.

"You've guessed why I'm here, I reckon?" he continued, placing the bottle on the table at his elbow.

Peter shook his head.

"No? Well, seeing what's going to happen to you, I don't mind telling you. We'll understand each other better." He jerked a sinister thumb toward the window. "I've got a hundred pounds of dynamite with a time fuse attached, cached under the conduit at the mouth of the tunnel. I had figured on setting 'er off last night and getting back to town before daylight. But when I went to crank the car before lighting the fuse, the engine wouldn't start. It was daylight before I got it fixed, too late to touch the stuff off. So there was nothing to do but wait till tonight."

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He grinned in evident enjoyment.

"If I hadn't seen you lamping me through your glasses I wouldn't have bothered coming over. Curiosity killed the cat," he ended with ominous jocularity.

Peter dropped his eyes under the other's repulsive leer. Through his mind flashed visions of the suffering of the millions that inhabited Laurencetown and the adjacent valleys, if they were cut off from their water supply. Forty-eight hours would empty the reservoirs; paralyze the power stations; plunge the city in darkness, and what was worse, in the grip of pestilence.

He knew that a certain element of the farmers in the upper end of the Puente desert considered their water rights threatened by the city of Laurencetown tapping the Sierra water shed with the aqueduct. But he also knew that the city had been more than fair—had, in fact, offered to buy out the dissatisfied element at a figure twice the value of the land—and that this offer had been scornfully rejected. The figure the ranchers demanded was ten times the value of the land, and the city of Laurencetown, naturally, had refused to be held up in any such fashion.

The desert men had sworn vengeance. It had come.

The man pulled a chair up to the table and sat down.

"When I saw you lamping me through the glasses," he repeated, "I knew you'd be nosing around my camp before the day was much older, so I came over. That fire of mine was a mistake, but I had a little job of black-smithing to do, so it couldn't be helped. I've got to kill you—not that I want to, you understand. 'S'matter of self-preservation. But——"

Peter kept silent. His mind leaped from one wild plan to another. On the stand a few feet away stood the telephone, fastened to the wall by its six feet of cord. It might as well have been a hundred miles from him. A movement of his adversary's hand for the gun on the table beside the bottle, made him stiffen. The stranger noted this.

"Don't worry, I'm not going to kill you until sundown, so you've got a whole nice long day ahead of you." He glanced at the telephone. "You'll report at noon and at six this evening, as usual. I don't want to have any inquisitive range riders come snooping around here to find out why they don't hear from you at headquarters. Then at sundown you'll say your little prayers, and it'll be all over in a hurry."

He removed his hat and pulling out a soiled red bandana, wiped his face. The current of air from the fan ploughed through his coarse black hair, flattening it about his small pointed ears like the fur of a stalking cat.

"In the story books they always have 'em shot at sunrise," he continued in the same mocking strain. "I don't know why! Sundown's more—human. You don't have to get up so damn early." He paused, pleased with this clever remark. "By the time they find you, the tunnel will be busted, and I'll be pounding my ear in my hotel in Laurencetown. Now, you see why I got to bump you off, don't you?"

He arose and stood swaying before Peter, steadying himself by the table. The liquor was beginning to take effect.

"Hotter'n hell," he puffed as he ran his shirt sleeve across his red, greasy face. He held the bottle out to Peter. "Have a drink. It'll brace you up. No? All right, that much more for me."

He moved over to the bunk and threw himself upon it, the bottle propped up against the pillow. From time to time he lifted it to his lips, and as he drank his loquaciousness increased. His chatter became maudlin. His voice filled the little cabin with its deadly monotony. Peter noted, through a blur, that the thermometer showed a hundred and four.

The man lay on the bunk, watching him through slitted eyes.

An hour passed—two. Peter's arms were numb now. His wrists ached no longer. He seemed to be suspended in midair, held there by some horrible force that defied the laws of gravity. Darts of purple and scarlet mingled with his vision, through which the man on the bed appeared magnified to monstrous repulsiveness. One of his hairy hands moved to his vest pocket.

"Twelve o'clock," he announced. "Time to report."

He arose and lumbered to the small table where the telephone stood.

"If you know what's good for you, you won't try to pull anything," he told Peter. "One peep out of you, and you won't see the sunset I promised to show you."

He gave the bell crank a turn, lifted the instrument until the mouth piece was within six inches of Peter's lips, and placed the receiver to the helpless man's left ear.

"All right," he said under his breath, "do your stuff."

Peter moistened his stiffened lips.

"Station Eleven, Winston reporting," he said as steadily as he could.

A moment later Jenny's voice was transmitted to him across the hundred miles of wire:

"Station Eleven, Winston. Time, twelve-one. They tell me it's hot out your way."

"Yes," he replied hollowly, "it's hot."

There was a moment's pause, then: "What's the matter, Peter? You're not sick are you?"

"No, I'm not—sick," he told her with an effort.

The receiver was taken from his ear and hung up.

"That'll be about enough of that," said the man as he replaced the instrument.

He picked up the pistol and went to the door. Peter heard him moving about outside. He returned presently, munching a chunk of bread smeared thickly with outter.

"Some refrigerator you got out there," he said. "It's about the only cool spot in this blasted hole."

He flung himself on the bunk and ate the bread with grinding, sidewise movements of his jaws. When he had finished, he wiped his mouth on his shirt sleeve and poured himself another drink from the now half-empty bottle, then flopped back on the pillow.

"What a hell of a hole to spend your life in," he wheezed. "Hotter'n blazes!"

The afternoon wore on. Heat moved in great pulsating waves across the parched land. The man on the bed lay without movement, except when he reached for the bottle.

At two o'clock he arose. The perspiration was pouring down the furrows of his heavy face. He flung the empty bottle through the open door with an oath, and staggered across the floor.

"What d'you do to keep cool in this place?" he demanded crossly.

Peter raised his head. He stared at the speaker. Power of speech had left him. The man before him was a vague, swaying blur which Peter's eyes sought to avoid. They came to rest upon the earthen-ware *olla* in its covering of wet burlap, outside the window. He stared at it hungrily, his tongue swollen and leathery from thirst and suffering.

"I said, what d'you do to keep cool?" the man reiterated heavily. He was very drunk, and blinked through the half stupor of a brain paralysed by alcohol and excessive heat.

Peter's head dropped forward on his chest. Above him the fan droned. The man's question seemed to be caught in the current of churning air and whirled away, only to be thrown back at him with a sort of deadly insistence. The droning of the fan became articulate with the voices of multitudes pleading for water—with the plaint of little children, and the fainter pleas of growing things. Back in the deep recesses of his tortured mind the answer lay—crept to the front, receded, returned, evaded him, and then burst upon his consciousness with the brilliance of a star shell.

"There is only one way—to keep cool—in this country. The price of the secret is—a drink of water."

The man looked at him in silence. He seemed to be considering the bargain.

"All right," he growled, "you get it."

Ages seemed to have passed when a pannikin full of water was held to Peter's swollen lips. His tissues reached out a thousand parched fingers for the last drop of moisture in the cup. Then he spoke. In steady tones he told the stranger how desert men keep cool.

The other blinked at him stupidly. Peter wondered for one breathless moment if his adversary had seen through his plan, then his heart leaped when the man said:

"Sounds reasonable. Believe I'll try it."

The man undressed. Stripped to the skin he stood revealed in all his primitive ugliness. His chest was a mass of coarse, black furze, extending to the slope of the shoulders, from which his long arms hung slightly forward, monkey-fashion, with the palms of the furry hands almost touching the knees. He kicked the discarded garments into the corner, jerked the two woolen blankets off the bunk and lurched out of the door.

A moment later Peter heard him turning on the shower at the rear of the cabin. He returned presently with the dripping wet blankets, wrapped himself in them, and, according to Peter's instructions, lay down on the bunk directly in the path of the powerful current of air from the fan.

Five minutes passed. He raised himself on one elbow and gave Peter a drink-sodden grin.

"Great idea, this," he said. "Too bad I've got to kill you—shmart boy."

Then he slumped back on the pillow.

At four o'clock, the quicksilver in the thermometer reached a hundred and nine. The man on the bunk moved slightly, and one of his long arms dropped over the edge. A faint shudder ran down the smooth, wet surfaces of the blankets, as if what lay beneath them was in the grip of an arctic chill.

The legs of the prisoner, handcuffed to the wooden upright, sagged. Very slowly, almost as if he were easing himself down, he crumbled up at the foot of the column. His head pitched forward.

The sun moved westward and touched the tips of the Sierras. Desert denizens crept timidly from their burrows and blinked at the lengthening shadows.

The sun-rays shot the cabin windows with burnished copper. Above the prisoner's head the fan droned. The only other sound was the drip of a tiny drop of water from the corner of the wet blanket, that fell now and then, at the foot of the bed.

Suddenly, the stillness of the cabin was shattered by the tinkling of the telephone bell. A short, brisk ring, followed by another and another, until the small room was filled to the rafters with the insistent and peremptory call. Then silence.

IT was near midnight when a powerful car came to a skidding stop outside the cabin, and four stern-faced men and a frightened girl ran in. They unlocked the steel bands from Peter's wrists, and forced some fiery stuff between his lips. He could not speak but pointed to the bunk. Doctor Craig, one of the men, crossed to it and threw the blankets aside.

"Keep the girl back," he said under his breath as his three companions crowded about the bed.

Craig bent over the nude form. He laid his ear to the man's chest, and sniffed at his face. One of his companions touched the skin gingerly with his fingertips.

"If it wasn't August," the man remarked, "I'd say that this hombre was frozen to death."

Doctor Craig straightened up. He ran his right hand over the still damp blankets, then held it out in the strong current of air from the fan.

"You're almost right," he replied, "refrigeration by quick evaporation—the oldest freezing method known. He's not dead, though, only paralysed by the cold. Better slip the handcuffs on him before he comes to. He looks like an ugly customer." He smiled down at Jenny. She was crying softly, her lover's head in her lap. "Our young friend is evidently something of a scientist as well as a very resourceful and courageous man."

Peter's lips were working. He was trying to say something.

"The dynamite!" he finally managed to blurt out.

Craig nodded.

"It's all right, son," the doctor replied. "We all but wrecked ourselves on his flivver down the line. The stuff's under the rear seat of my car."

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Are Mothers Slackers?

Mrs. M.—Continued from page 74

seniors went to her mother and described candidly "what sort of stuff is being pulled in this town." No names were mentioned. But each made her appeal: "Plenty of girls stand for this sort of thing, and the boys are getting so that they won't stand for anything else. Can't you and the other women who give the parties and chaperone them do something about it?"

They did. The mothers, at an informal meeting of the Woman's Club agreed that at all future parties the chaperones would keep a black list. On it would go the names of the boy and girl who brought a pocket flask, who sneaked out for petting party or joy ride, or in any other way violated the laws of good breeding. For the first offense they would receive a warning. For the second offense, they would be invited to no more parties during the remainder of the season. The women pledged themselves to scrutinize carefully cards for dances so that blacklisted youngsters could not "crash the gate." Also, the mothers of sons promised to see that the family car was in the garage within a reasonable time after each party broke up.

When the news of the decisions seeped out, certain boys and girls scoffed loudly. It just seemed like more parental "interference," to be frowned or laughed off. But they found it was something stronger—the crystallization of a sentiment which many had felt, but on which as individuals they had had difficulty in acting.

The best of the youngsters, boys as well as girls, were at heart on the side of the new social order. For as you suggested in your letter, there are boys who secretly admire the girl with high standards, but who are too youthfully self-conscious to stand out against the general drift. And after certain coveted invitations had been withheld, the majority of the younger set in my town decided that they'd better play the game according to the new rules.

The scabs of sex—the girls who violate the unwritten laws governing the natural union of decent young women—no longer enjoy an unfair advantage. The girls once left out for self-respect's sake are left out no longer.

NOW, my dear, why cannot you and your friends "start something" in just this fashion? You remember that I said you were at least nine-tenths right in your position. Let me analyze the one-tenth in which you may be wrong. I wonder if you have not, all along, been too passive? To be sure you have not known what you could do, but now that a plan is suggested to you I hope that your resolution will not fail. Girls like you should be a constructive and not merely a conservative force.

Again, be careful not to cuddle an inferiority complex. Don't think continually about how much more popular other girls are! You are not hard to look at, you can dress attractively, you are fond of sports, are a good dancer and a laughter-lover. Here is no ground for humility. If you never forget that you are a person worth liking, worth loving, you are much more likely to "get across" the idea to others. As an exceedingly wise young woman once said to me, "Men never know anything unless you tell 'em!"

It is not necessary for the preservation of self-respect to lean over backward into priggishness. While I quite agree with you that no nice girl indulges in promiscuous and alcoholically stimulated petting, it is possible that you and your friends are more formal—and formidable—than you need be. You need not be too reserved in your attitude toward the boys you have known all your life. However difficult to achieve, there *is* a happy medium between abandon and austerity!

"Haven't you noted," remarked to me the pretty young author of several of the most widely read novels of the younger generation, "that my heroines do very little petting? It really isn't necessary. Only if a girl doesn't pet she must get another line!"

While I honestly believe that with the cooperation I have suggested your social life can be made happier, still I would also suggest that you try to find some other interest. It is a problem for an only daughter whose companionship is so much desired at home, and who has no great, all-demanding talent. Yet if you were an only son your parents would not expect you to sit around, and be happy or miserable according to the degree of your inclusion in social activities.

Surely there must be some serious aim which appeals to you! Your father is a doctor; wouldn't you like to go as a visiting nurse into the inadequate homes he knows? If he is on the staff of any hospital, is there no work in it for you to do?

It seems to me that even the smallest job would be more interesting than the position of sheltered daughter—though you may not wish to make a life-long career of either rôle!

Nor will that be necessary, I feel sure. For it is true—other persons have told you and you haven't believed them—that the girl who makes herself cheap is not the girl whom even the boys that cheapen her want to marry. These girls achieve a temporary popularity, but look back two or three years. Are the girls who halfway through high school "mushed anybody and everybody," to use your phrase, still widely invited—the same girls? Haven't the boys already dropped them for another crowd of petters? And is this latter crowd getting married—or merely getting bids to dances?

With rare exceptions, the boys who marry choose a girl worth marrying. But they are choosing her later these days for economic reasons. If you were twenty-nine instead of nineteen I should still say that all the chances are in favor of the husband, home, and children you are justified in wanting.

It is the other kind of girl, the foolish little imitation siren, who is left out of *life*—not you. And you will never be really sorry you are different from the inferior girl. You were born fine: you cannot, in your heart, regret it.

MRS. M.

Mr. H—Continued from page 75

takes the joy out of life more quickly than contact with such a person. Consequently, boys will play with almost any pretty dumb-bell rather than take a chance, and when the time for marriage comes are even more cautious.

I haven't accused you of being a prig—that would be cruel. Nothing in your letter suggests conscious moral superiority. You seem to me sweet, frank, likable, uncommonly what is called nice. Nevertheless I must tell you that you are nearer to becoming a prig than you can possibly realize. You are on the very edge of that detested state and headed straight for it. Your letter also tells me that.

What I mean is that no girl can afford to set herself apart from, and a little above, her friends, unless she proposes to do something to justify it. You say that you are through school and live at home, having no special talent nor interest in a career; that you love sports—but you do not say that you have ever tried to excel in any of them—and you end your letter with the rather unpardonable remark, "Maybe I'm a fool for not imitating her"—meaning the girl who allows men to muss her up. Now all this sounds, if you will pardon me, just a bit lazy and slack.

You know perfectly well—to take the last thing first—that you don't intend to start petting, and the very fact that you make the last remark reveals the insidious presence of a touch of bitterness springing from your not being properly appreciated. I am bound to say that your life strikes me as rather empty for an active girl of nineteen. If this is so, if it is really empty, then what chance are you giving yourself to be the fine person you want to become?

If you don't go out and do something you will get to be a prig. If you don't make an effort to impress yourself in your own way upon the people around you, no one is going to appreciate you. Other girls may win husbands with their cheap "pep and pash." Forget them. It is not your line. You will be twenty times more interesting to the right man for not having that sort of thing in your nature. But after all what *is* your line?

I AM sorry if my reply to your question takes you to task. But I want you to leave off worrying about what other girls are doing and think more about what you yourself ought to do. Happiness, it is said, is on the highway. Look about you for something interesting to do and when you find it go at it with all your energy. Once you are on your way you will stop wondering why boys do not call you up to go to parties. You won't care a rap whether they do or not. You will have something to think about that will fill your days; you will have the companionship of other girls who, either from necessity or choice, are taking life seriously; and there will come a look and a light to your eyes which will attract to you the type of man who is suited to you.

At nineteen you have long and full years ahead before the need comes to settle down. Marriage at twenty-five is as common now as marriage at twenty used to be. Don't bother your head about your failure to compete successfully with flappers of the petting variety. Develop your own strong points. Work at something hard if it is only your game of tennis or golf. In short, make yourself stand out for what you do rather than for what you refrain from doing.

You will find that other kinds of pep are appreciated besides kicking out your skirts on a dance floor, and that men are ready to fall down and worship the girl who combines feminine sweetness with the capacity to make something of her life. In the great cities this girl is on a pinnacle to-day; in the smaller towns she is also coming into her own.

Think over what I have said to you. Show a wise head. And good luck!

MR. H.

The Pigeon—Continued from page 73

of Monaco were removing the blue chairs from the chilling terrace.

"Everybody's gone in," I said.

Ballard stopped and looked.

"There are a couple of lovers leaning over the balustrade," he observed.

Ballard's eyes were pretty keen, and I don't think he had mistaken the figures of his wife and Harry. But he pretended not to know them. They were standing very close together, and they were silent, staring seaward. Their silence was eloquent. Lovers? It was no wild guess.

"Harry," I called.

He turned, hearing my voice, and Ballard laughed.

"I suppose they hadn't noticed that it's cold here," he said—ostensibly to me. Rather elaborately he offered his wife an arm. "We might go into the Casino a little," he suggested.

There was something reassuring about the Casino. This, at least, I told myself, was no gambling hell in which a man might draw a pistol and put four bullets through the five of hearts. Men played decorously at Monte Carlo and in a silence that was almost funereal.

The voices of the croupiers were dull, as if the life in their little world were in a state of suspension. I know I didn't want to play, and Harry didn't. Mrs. Ballard was extraordinarily quiet. But Ballard walked over to the first of the tables where ten francs buy a pawn and began to put his money on the red.

You know—I've told you—that he did everything well, whether it was breaking a plate with a bullet or playing bridge or murdering trapped pigeons. He had an uncanny run of luck. He stood beside a queer little French girl with great black eyes and hungry hollows in her cheeks and dropped his pawns on the red diamond. It was some time, I think, before I noticed that he was playing her game; that he waited to see what she was going to do. Sometimes she didn't bet. But more often she put her money on the red. Invariably Ballard followed her, and almost invaria-

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